

**Wanderers between Cultural Boundaries:
Exploring the Individual Expressions of Chineseness in Newfoundland**

By

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Abstract

With less than 2000 members, the Chinese community(-ies) of Newfoundland and Labrador represents the province's largest "visible minority." The Chinese have had a commercial presence since 1895 but their cultural impact has been less visible. My doctoral dissertation examines the Chinese community(-ies) of Newfoundland and Labrador, focusing especially on the St. John's area. It traces the experiences of the largest "visible minority" of the youngest province of Canada. Through historical description, fieldwork observation and interpersonal interviews, it documents contemporary Chinese traditions in Newfoundland and explores how individual Chinese Newfoundlanders who may be different from each other in terms of birthplace, language, occupation, socioeconomic class, immigration time and other social and cultural aspects, perceive and present their personal versions of Chineseness. My research challenges the stereotypical notion of the homogeneous Chinese community in Newfoundland and draws attention to the intra-group differences which is highlighted through individuals' folkloric practices such as foodways, festival celebrations and cultural performance to comprehensively present how the image of "Chinese in Newfoundland" is established and developed.

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2014 marks the 6th year of my stay in Canada and now I am at the final stage of my studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Upon reflection of my studies and time at university, I feel that I owe many people a big “Thank you.”

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Diane is the best supervisor that one can ever expect. The encouragement and support from Diane has been the dynamic of my study and research. With the invaluable help of Diane, I was able to publish my first English article about the jokes of the contaminated Chinese Sanlu Milk, give my first lecture on the topic of “Chinese in Newfoundland” to undergraduate students of her Folklore 1000 class at Memorial University and provide the first conference presentation at the 2010 annual meeting of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada (FSAC) in Montreal. In addition, assisted with Diane’s strong recommendation, I have been the recipient of several research grants and awarded various scholarships from different sources even outside the field of

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Chapter One Introduction	1
The Trigger and the Theme	1
On the Shoulders of Giants: A Brief Overview of Relevant Literature	10
Newfoundland Sources	10
Folklore Studies of Chinese Ethnicity	12
Folklore and Ethnicity	16
Multidisciplinary Views of Ethnicity	20
Methodologies and Resources	23
Reflections on My Fieldwork	35
The Map	42
 Chapter Two A Better Life: Stories of First, Second and Later Waves of Immigration	 46
Gold Mountain: First Wave Migrants and the Laundry Business	46
The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons	57
Family Reunion after Confederation: The Second Immigration Wave	62
The Coming of Professionals: A New Wave of Chinese Immigration	70
 Chapter Three Convergence to Divergence: Living as “Chinese” in Newfoundland	 81
Working to Survive	81
Highlights of Chinese Social Life in Newfoundland before Confederation	84
Early Chinese Organizations: Clan Associations and Others	84
The KMT and the Chinese War Relief Association	92
Christianity	96

Intermarriage	98
Changes in Chinese Social Life in the Post-Confederation Era	101
The Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and Its Socio-cultural Roles	104
An Umbrella for All Chinese	104
The Decline of CANL's Membership	115
The Intra-group Diversity of Current Chinese Community in Newfoundland	119
Regional Difference	119
Differences of Personal Response to the Chinese Head Tax Redress	122
Socioeconomic Difference	126
Religious Difference	127
Generational Difference	137
Chapter Four Negotiating Chinese Culinary Traditions in Newfoundland	154
Food, Identity and Folklore	154
The Chinese Foodways at Home	157
Chinese Restaurants in Newfoundland and the Emergence of North American Style Chinese Food	164
The Private and the Public: Home Cooking and Restaurant Style	175
The Negotiation of Culinary Traditions: the Emergence of "Traditional Dishes"	183
The Architecture of Chinese Restaurants and Culinary Authenticity	190
Further Discussion on Culinary Authenticity	205
Chapter Five Celebrating Chineseness: Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newfoundland	208
Early Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newfoundland (1890s – Early 1970s)	208
Celebrations at home in the Contemporary Period (1970s – Now)	214
From Private to Public	221
The Hybridity of the Public Chinese New Year's Celebrations in Newfoundland	231
Setting of Date and Time	232
Making up the List of Invited Guests	236
Determining Entertainment	244

Selecting Food	252
Conclusion	257
 Chapter Six Performing Chineseness: The Lion Dance in Newfoundland	 259
Lion Dance and the Identity of Chinese Diasporic Communities	260
From China to Canada: The Revival of an Old Tradition in Newfoundland	265
Historical Authenticity: The Cultural Roots and Early Lion Dancers	268
Personal Authenticity: New Generation Lion Dancers	278
Lion Dancing Audience	290
Current Situation	303
Further Discussion	306
 Chapter Seven Conclusion	 310
 Bibliography	 319
Appendix: A Brief History of Chinese Students in Newfoundland and Labrador	348

List of Tables

Table 1: Information of My Principal Research Participants

Table 2: Beats of Lion Dancing for the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's

Table 3: Figures of Lion Dancing for the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's

Table 4: The New Pattern of the Whole Performance Process.

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Ah Wan (Yvonne) Tse (May Soo's Mother), Hong Szeto (May Soo's paternal grandmother) and Tom Yet Foo (known as Tom Chow, May Soo's father).
- Figure 2: Taiwan Restaurant in Grand Falls-Windsor, 2014.
- Figure 3: Tai Mei Club (5 Bates Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland) in 1982.
- Figure 4: War Relief Certificate (front) (face value of \$5).
- Figure 5: War Relief Certificate (back).
- Figure 6: Chinese Consul –General and Delegates.
- Figure 7: Dr. Chao-Ying Shih and the Chinese in St. John's, 1940.
- Figure 8: William Ping and Ethel Squibb,.
- Figure 9: Chinese Memorial Monument at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John's.
- Figure 10: Chinese Memorial Monument at Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery, St. John's.
- Figure 11: Chinese Memorial Monument at General Protestant Cemetery, St. John's
- Figure 12: Chinese Head Tax Monument, St. John's.
- Figure 13: Members of NLHTRC in front of the Chinese Head Tax Monument on September 17, 2010
- Figure 14: The Visit of a Missionary Group from Toronto in 1989.
- Figure 15: Offering Envelop for the Chinese Ministry.
- Figure 16: Magic Wok Grocery on Duckworth Street, St. John's (Exterior).
- Figure 17: Magic Wok Grocery on Duckworth Street, St. John's (Interior).
- Figure 18: The Opening of Jade Garden Restaurant in 1982, St. John's.
- Figure 19: Formosa Tea House.
- Figure 20: The Building of the Seven Seas Restaurant in Corner Brook (western cafeteria style).
- Figure 21: Helen's Restaurant in Badgar (western cafeteria style).

Figure 22: Kenmount Restaurant (exterior), St. John's.

Figure 23: Kenmount Restaurant (The Gate at the Dining Room), St. John's.

Figure 24: Kenmount Restaurant (Ceiling), St. John's.

Figure 25: Kenmount Restaurant (Ceiling), St. John's.

Figure 26: Taiwan Restaurant, St. John's (Exterior).

Figure 27: Taiwan Restaurant in St. John's (Interior).

Figure 28: Jackie Tan Restaurant's Dining Room, Corner Brook.

Figure 29: Jackie Tan Restaurant's Cash Counter, Corner Brook.

Figure 30: Jackie Tan Restaurant's Cash Counter, Corner Brook.

Figure 31: King City Restaurant's Dining Room, Grand Falls-Windsor.

Figure 32: Magic Wok Eatery, St. John's (contemporary style).

Figure 33: City Light Buffet, St. John's (contemporary style).

Figure 34: Uncle Li's Restaurant, Clarenville (contemporary style).

Figure 35: Cash Counter of the Dragon Restaurant, Corner Brook.

Figure 36: Jiwen Garden, Corner Brook.

Figure 37: Taiwan Restaurant, Grand Falls-Windsor.

Figure 38: East Ocean Restaurant, Gander.

Figure 39: Highlight Restaurant, Gander.

Figure 40: Tai Hong Restaurant, Clarenville.

Figure 41: Cover of the CANL's 1977 Chinese New Year Celebration Book.

Figure 42: 1978 CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration at the Auditorium of St. Mary's Church, St. John's.

Figure 43: Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion in 2011, St. John's.

Figure 44: Audience at the 2011 CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration, St. John's.

Figure 45: CANL's Family Fun Day at Gower Street United Church in 2008, St. John's.

Figure 46: Tzu-Hao Hsu (left) and Alick Tsui (right), MCs of the 2011 CANL Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's.

Figure 47 Appetizer (Spring Rolls, BBQ Pork, Shrimp Balls and Pickled Veggies) at the CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Region in 2011, St. John's.

Figure 48: Food at CANL's 2007 Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's.

Figure 49: Lion Puppet at the 1977's CANL Garden Party at the Beaconsfield High School's Gym.

Figure 50: Lion Puppet at the 1977's CANL Garden Party at the Beaconsfield High School's Play Ground.

Figure 51: The CANL's Rainbow lion.

Figure 52: The Big Head Buddha.

Figure 53: The Group Photo of Sifu Luk's Workshop in 1984.

Figure 54: Lions at the 2008 CANL Family Fun Day, Gower Street United Church, St. John's.

Figure 55: The Workshop of Sifu Luk.

Figure 56: Some Members of the CANL Lion Dance Troupe at 2011's CANL Family Fun Day, Gower Street United Church, St. John's.

Figure 57: Lion Dancing at the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's.

Figure 58: Lion Dancing at Mary Gin's Wedding, St. John's.

Figure 59: Lion Dancing at the Opening of Jade Garden Restaurant, St. John's.

Figure 60: Lion Dancing at the Rooms for the Event "Sharing Our Culture" in 2012, St. John's.

Figure 61: Lion Dancing at the 2013 St. John's Christmas Parade.

Figure 62: Lion Dancing at Magic Wok Eatery's 2010 Christmas Party at Delta Hotel, St. John's.

Figure 63: CANL's Silver Lion.

Chapter One

Introduction

The Trigger and the Theme

I was raised and spent most of my childhood and adolescence in Guangxi (广西) province in southern China, which is one of the most diverse provinces of China and the home province of the Zhuang People (壮族), the largest minority in China. As many other people in that province, I was born into an intermarriage between Han 汉 and Zhuang, my mother being a Zhuang (she can also speak Cantonese and local Han language) and my father a Hakka¹ (客家人) from Canton province (Guangdong 广东). Although I self identify as a Han Hakka Chinese, my physical appearance reveals my mixed background. This difference was noticeable when I went to Peking University (北京大学) in Beijing, where the Han people are the dominant majority. People in Beijing always regard me as a member of a minority. But this situation changed when I went to Northwest Sichuan and East Tibet, which are the traditional territories of Tibetans, in the summer of 2005. The Tibetans could not tell the differences between me and other Han people, and they appeared to be surprised when they heard that I had a Zhuang mother. At that moment, I felt myself experience an identity crisis and gradually realized the relativity of ethnicity. From then on, I have paid more attention to identity and ethnicity issues and consider them as the main focus of my main academic pursuit.

¹ Hakka is a group of people who migrate from northern China to southern China (mainly Canton, Fujian and Jiangxi provinces). The migration started in the 4th century when the northern part of China was at war. Hakka people have their unique language, tradition and culture which are different from nowadays' northern Chinese and other Cantonese people.

The first time I stood on Canadian soil in Toronto, I strongly sensed the ethnic mosaic of Canada, not only physically, but also culturally. However, when I arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland, I found that the "visible minorities" were quite invisible both physically and culturally in this Atlantic province. In publications, from historical treatments to tourism promotions, Newfoundland culture was portrayed as being homogeneously of Irish and English descent and shaped by a total dependence on the cod fishery (see, e.g., Hiller and Neary 1994; Mannion 1977; Clarke 1998). This image accurately reflects some facts of the place and its culture but at that point, as a potential folklorist, I also wondered if it also simplifies Newfoundland's complex history that includes peoples of diverse cultural origins. I felt a great desire to ask: Where is the province's ethnic diversity? What and where are its cultural groups and their traditions? Because of my Chinese background and my advanced language skills in two major Chinese languages used in overseas Chinese communities, Mandarin and Cantonese, I decided to turn to Chinese Newfoundlanders, the largest visible minority in the province, to answer my questions. This group is now the topic of my doctoral dissertation.

Numbering 1,325, the Chinese (who are self-defined) represent Newfoundland and Labrador's largest non-indigenous "visible minority" with a single ethnic origin. However, even as the biggest group, they comprised only 0.26 percent of the province's total population in 2006 and represent the second smallest Chinese population in Canada's ten provinces (Statistics Canada 2006). Within the province, the distribution of Chinese residents is uneven with around seventy-five percent of all Chinese (985 out of 1,325) living in the St. John's Metropolitan Area (Statistics Canada 2006). My fieldwork suggests that in recent years (from 2006 until now) the percentage of the population of individuals of Chinese descent with various backgrounds in St. John's area has continued to grow due to factors such as the in-migration of Chinese from rural

communities and newly-settled landed immigrants' preference to stay in an urban area. Because the main campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland is located in St. John's, the capital city is also the destination of many Chinese students and their families (mainly their spouses and children). For these reasons, and because I was based at Memorial University, my study of the Chinese in Newfoundland chiefly—but not exclusively-- explores the experience of Chinese immigrants and their descendants² in the St. John's area since their first presence (my discussion of the activities of Chinese students is limited because of their mobility). As a result, the terms “Chinese in Newfoundland and Labrador” and “Chinese in St. John's” overlap and throughout the thesis I use them interchangeably.

The small number of people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland does not reflect a recent arrival of the Chinese to Newfoundland. The first Chinese came in the summer of 1895 in an attempt to escape intensive social discrimination prevalent in the United States³ and in parts of Canada⁴, such as the west coast, where many Chinese had settled (*Daily News*, August 18, 1895). The first Chinese residents of Newfoundland had originally intended to relocate to the United Kingdom but when they realized there was an absence of Chinese in this former British colony, they decided to stay longer (if not permanently) to pursue commercial opportunities. It was “good business” in their words (*Daily News*, August 18, 1895). They opened laundries in the Dominion of Newfoundland just as Chinese entrepreneurs were doing in many other places in North America at the time.

For many Chinese pioneers to North America around the turn of the century, their wish to live a better life in the “Gold Mountain” did not come true, even if they could “do everything for

² Some of these descendants may claim their mixed background due to the intermarriage of their parents.

³ On May 6, 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act (An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese) was approved by the 47th Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur (see US Immigration Legislation Online http://library.uwb.edu/guides/usimmigration/1882_chinese_exclusion_act.html).

⁴ The Canadian Chinese Immigration Act 1885 (An Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration into Canada) was assented to July 20, 1885 (Ottawa, 48-49 Victoria, Chapter 71, 207-212).

gentlemen [sic]" as one St. John's newspaper report on early Chinese read (*Daily News*, August 18, 1895). Their lack of success often was not due to laziness or any other unsatisfactory personality trait, but rather because of documentation on account of their ethnic background as "Chinese," a label that was used to lump together a group of diverse people whose heterogeneity was completely ignored. Studies document that the harsh life that many Chinese experienced in Canada, as well as in Newfoundland, began at the onset of their journey to this "Promised Land" (see e.g. Li 1994, 1998; Mar 2010; Poy 2013; Shah 2001; Siu 1987 and Wickberg et. al. 1982). Legislative restrictions on immigration, institutional discrimination and social isolation meant these early Chinese adventurers experienced not only serious economic hardship and/or failure, but more substantially, tremendous emotional struggle and depression (see, e.g. Hoe 2003 and Ping 1995a and 1995b). As many early studies show, the syndromes of these affective difficulties that might be labelled "psychological acculturation problems" or "psychological distress" are more visible when the surrounding social environment is unbearable (Aldwin and Greenberger 1987, Berry 2006a, 2006b; Dyal and Chan 1985, Jones and Sheldon 1982, Kuo 1976, Kuo and Tsai 1986, Lin 1993 and Ward et al. 2001). For many Chinese who came to Newfoundland or other places in North America in the early days, their identity as "Chinese" during the processes of immigration and social adaptation was an unattractive mask. It could be a heavy burden that was, and to some degree still is, difficult if not impossible to overcome.

Immigration history of the Chinese in the late nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century reflects an understanding of Chinese identity as not only negative, but as innate, fixed and socially labelled from the outside. In contemporary terms, being Chinese is more often seen as having a valuable heritage and in political and academic discourse, Chinese identity can be negotiated. "As a child, I never felt like I was different from other kids" May Soo, the former

owner of the Taiwan Restaurant in St. John's, says, "I always considered myself to be just like everyone else until one January in grade one or two, after the Christmas break when the teacher asked us what Santa brought us. When it was my turn to speak, I was stuck for words. When I went home that afternoon, I told my grandmother that Santa had given all my classmates toys and they were talking about it in class. I asked my grandmother why Santa had not visited our home and she replied 'Santa does not come to Chinese homes'. I was confused because I did not think that I was any different from anybody else" (May Soo 2013).

Sometimes, an individual's Chinese identity was even denied. "I am not a Chinese, but the old man was," said a second-generation Chinese who would like to stay anonymous in St. John's. "Oh, don't listen to him! He is a Chinese," immediately corrected Gilbert Wong, another second-generation Chinese Newfoundlander who was also at the scene and was born and raised in Botwood and now works for NRC (National Research Council). The question being debated in this conversation lies at the heart of my thesis: in the Newfoundland context, who is Chinese? Through the following chapters I explore social constructions of Chinese identity(-ies) in different historical and social contexts.

In academic discussions, the variously-defined term "Chineseness" is seen to be "a theoretical problem" (Chow 1998) by many scholars who frequently interrogate, challenge and even reject its use (Ang 1993, 1994, 1998 and 2001; Chun 1996, Tu 1991 and 1994, Wang 1991 and Wu 1991). Nowadays, China (People's Republic China 中华人民共和国) with its land area generally stated as being approximately 9.6 million km² and its population of 1.3 billion people made up of 56 nationalities (including Taiwan, representing Republic of China 中华民国), often claims its unique cultural tradition which can be traced back to roughly 5,000 years ago.

However, the concept of “China” in the sense of a modern nation state did not exist until 19th century when nationalism was brought to China along with many other modern Western ideologies and ideas as “an instrument for China’s regeneration and defense” in the encounter between the East and the West (Zhao 2004, 16). China (Republic of China), as a modern nation state, was first founded in 1912 after the overthrow of the imperial Qing dynasty 清朝 (1644-1911). Simultaneously, a national sense of Chinese identity was also in the process of construction by bureaucratic and institutional promotion and education of a common ancestral culture, which is “not just imagined but authorized and institutionalized” (Chun 1996, 114). Allen Chun notes that in the discourse of constructing a national identity, the authority of statements about shared values (embodied in language, ethnicity and custom) and shared myths (embodied as genres of knowledge, such as history, ideology and beliefs) are more important than other elements like symbols of national identity and icons of patriotic fervor (Chun 1996, 115).

Chun’s assertion that overseas Chinese communities played a determinant role in defining Chineseness conflicts with other definitions of Chineseness proposed by various authorities such as Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalists 中国国民党), Chinese Communists and other political, social and cultural powers (northern Chinese – Mandarin speakers and southern Chinese immigrants – Hokkiens, Hakka and Cantonese- from Fujian 福建 and Canton provinces) (Chun 1996). The concept of “Chineseness” therefore becomes more problematic when the Chinese diaspora or overseas Chinese communities are taken into consideration. Rey Chow notices that, “in the relatively new area of cultural studies, the notion of Chineseness as a

monolithic given bound ultimately to mainland China has been interrogated and critiqued by scholars attentive to issues of the Chinese diaspora” (Chow 1998, 8).

The term “Chinese diaspora,” or, as often referred in the research literature, “overseas Chinese,” “is a modern phrase that refers to the ethnic Chinese who live outside the national borders of China” (Chun 1996, 122). According to Allen Chun, this term is usually used by Chinese who reside abroad and self-identify as “ethnic Chinese” to characterize themselves in the conversations with homeland Chinese or foreigners (local non-Chinese residents); however, this term is often used without the association with one's real citizenship (Chun 1996, 122). The self-identification as Chinese diaspora shows one's sentimental attachment to a homeland and its culture. Without the obvious attachment to a Chinese homeland, as Chun claims, “there was probably little else to unite them as Chinese, except in contrast to non-Chinese” (Chun 1996, 122).

In many scholarly discussions of Chinese diaspora (Ang 1998, Chun 1996 Tu 1991 and 1994, Wang 1991 and Wu 1991), the notion of “cultural China” proposed by Tu Weiming (1991) emerges as one of the most instructive, although some philosophical issues need more development (Cohen 1991) as evidenced in Tu's challenge of notions of center and periphery. The Chinese diasporas are in a geographically, politically and socially peripheral position compared to the traditional Chinese “centers” of Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. However, Tu argues that the diaspora's importance in preserving the discourses of conceptualizing Chinese cultural identity is tremendous and, to some degree, more significant than the latter so-called centers. He terms this “The Periphery as the Center” (Tu 1991). Tu finds that, although individuals of various overseas Chinese communities are from different historical, social and cultural backgrounds and some of them have been deeply acculturated into local

societies, they still continue to claim a sense of Chinese identity(-ies), which may be defined differently in different contexts. Ultimately, Tu's idea of "cultural China" raises a fundamental question: is there a basis for a modern sense of "Chineseness" when many Chinese settle permanently and succeed in their newly adopted countries beyond the boundaries of traditional Chinese centers? In this sense, Tu's understanding of "cultural China" is similar to how Benedict Anderson conceptualizes "imagined communities," which are intellectually portrayed, massively imagined and culturally presented (Anderson 1983).

Building on Tu's idea of "cultural China," Ien Ang looks at diasporic Chineseness as not a category with a fixed content defined by racial, cultural or geographical elements but as "an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora" (Ang 1998, 225). She writes:

Being Chinese outside China cannot possibly mean the same thing as inside. It varies from place to place, molded by the local circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living. There are, in this paradigm, many different Chinese identities, not one. This proposition entails a criticism of Chinese essentialism, a departure from the mode of demarcating Chineseness through an absolutist oppositioning of authentic and inauthentic, pure and impure, real and fake. The anti-essentialism of the diasporic paradigm opens up a symbolic space for people... living a de-centered Chineseness that does not have to live up to the norm of "the essential Chinese subject. (Ang 1998, 225)

Therefore, because the meaning of being Chinese is continuously changing chronologically and geographically, the presentation of Chineseness in a specific diasporic community is only "a local response to the different historic-political circumstances" (Chun 1996, 125). As a response to the discussion of diasporic Chineseness and an attempt to answer the fundamental question proposed by Tu, my thesis explores the cultural presence of Chinese in Newfoundland in order to understand how members of a visible minority group (or groups) in this Canadian eastern province are bound by their ethnicity through "webs of power and meaning" (Chun 1996 125).

Specifically, my study will investigate intra-group diversity and ethnic individuality (Brubaker 2004) among Chinese residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It will explore how personal daily folkloric practices present ethnic individuality and how folkloric habitus - personal responses to ethnicity-centered events (such as festivals or customs) - display individuals' identities. An exploration of the interconnectedness of folklore and ethnicity will be at the core of this work. Through an analysis of cultural aspects from foodways to presentations of the Chinese New Year and the Lion Dance, I examine how individuals negotiate their Chineseness. My focus on ethnic individuality, that builds on the growing body of literature (see e.g. Alba 1988, 1990; Brubaker 2004; and Gans 1979), challenges the acculturative processing models of ethnic groups more commonly the premise of past folklore studies (see Dégh (1974, 53; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1972, 225-313; and Klymasz 1973, 134) and considers these evolutionary models at a more personal level. Unlike much earlier folkloristic scholarship, in my study of being Chinese in Newfoundland, I attempt not to generalize a "Chinese in Newfoundland" model or a Chinese Canadian acculturative process. Rather, I hope to investigate how individuals whose ancestry is associated with Chinese or Chineseness, which I consider as "habitus" in Pierre Bourdieu's terms (Bourdieu 1977[1972]), make personal decisions to perform their ethnic identities in the social and cultural context of Newfoundland and Labrador. Although I realize that not everybody is a rational decision-maker all the time, and that ethnicity is not the only factor influencing an individual's sense of identity, my point of departure for this thesis is that all Chinese-linked individuals have some knowledge of Chineseness. This awareness is the conscious or unconscious basis for the perception of their identity and the regulation of their daily ethnic performances. The group labeled as "Chinese" encompasses both those who identify themselves as Chinese and those who are identified as

Chinese legislatively or culturally. It refers to newly arrived immigrants from centers of “Cultural China” including various provinces of mainland China (after 1980s), Taiwan (mainly late 1960s-early 1990s), Hong Kong (mainly late 1960s –early 1990s) and Singapore, overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam (mainly mid 1960s – late 1970s), and those whose families were from Canton before Newfoundland’s confederation to Canada (1949) and have lived in North America for several generations. However, before turning to a discussion of the Newfoundland context, I first want to review some of the published literature that has informed this thesis and the central questions it explores.

On the Shoulders of Giants: A Brief Overview of Relevant Literature

Newfoundland Sources

Newfoundland’s Chinese community and culture has been the subject of several academic and popular studies. Some of these document aspects of the early immigrant experience. For example, Margaret [Walsh] Chang (1978; 1981) provides a historical account of the first decade of the arrival of Chinese. Marion Pitt (1981) and Miriam Yu (1986) expand the timespan in their studies to the mid-1980s and attempt to present the whole picture of the Chinese community province-wide. In addition to general histories, some works focus on specific issues significant to the social life of Chinese residents. For example, Robert Hong (1987) and John Kenneth Sparrow (2006) trace the history of the legislative process that resulted in the law restricting early Chinese immigration. They reveal how this law and the accompanying head tax profoundly influenced the daily lives of this group of early immigrants. Krista Chatman Li’s PhD dissertation, “ ‘Knights of the Flatiron’: Gender, Morality, and the Chinese in St. John’s, Newfoundland,

1895-1906,” focuses on the early Chinese “bachelors” in this former British Colony from the angle of social and cultural history (Li 2010).

Folklorist Ban Seng Hoe (2003) investigates the worklife of Newfoundland’s Chinese as laundrymen within the larger Canadian context and tries to understand how their occupation shaped their personalities and the public image of Chinese Canadians as a whole. While Hoe provides only uninterpreted transcriptions of interviews instead of critical analysis, other folklore scholars go deeper to identify and interpret cultural traditions and practices of Chinese in Newfoundland (Kozar 1993; Liu, 1991; Thomson, 1993; Zhu, 1991). Both Nianqiang Zhu and Seana Kozar explore oral genres of Chinese immigrants although their discussions indicate different theoretical foundations. Nianqiang Zhu’s study (1991) of joke repertoires among Chinese residents in Newfoundland recognizes the intra-group diversity of Chinese who differ from one another in many ways, such as when they immigrated, their religious background and occupation. This recognition drives Zhu to seek an overarching and uniting Chinese identity through commonalities in the joke-telling performances of a number of individuals. Seana Kozar’s work (1993) on Chinese heroines in traditional Chinese stories, looks at the immigration experience and its effects on her interviewees in Newfoundland. Kozar attempts to connect narratives in the new world with storytelling traditions of the old country. Jianxiang Liu and Margret Jillian Thomson’s works examine the folklife of Chinese settlers in Newfoundland and both of them are interested in the acculturation process of these immigrants. Jianxiang Liu (1991) finds that Chinese families stick to their traditional foodways in the new country even if some traditional Chinese foods are not available and some of their spouses are from non-Chinese communities. Margret Jillian Thomson pays more attention to the social and cultural changes of Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland in her investigation of Chinese festive customs in both

formal and informal settings. Although these studies were conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they still provide valuable insights into the culture and traditions of today's Chinese community in Newfoundland.

Folklore Studies of Chinese Ethnicity

Folkloric studies of Chinese in Newfoundland fall under the bigger academic umbrella of “folklore studies on Chinese ethnicity.” Because many works in this field are written in English and published in North American folklore journals, or are theses of students studying in major North American universities, my following discussion of this topic will be mainly derived from these sources.

The folklorists who study the Chinese in North America can be roughly divided into two groups. Researchers in the first group generally identify and document Chinese cultural practices in the North American context. In the second group, scholars make an effort to interpret the materials gathered by the former group or from their own fieldwork.

The documentation of Chinese culture in North America can be traced back to the late 1880s. One of the first published pieces was a note entitled “The Funeral Ceremonies of Chinese in America” that appeared in an early issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (1888). In 1890, Stewart Culin reported on his observations of Chinese secret societies in New England and their folk religious practices (Culin 1890a). In the same year, Stewart Culin published a second article on Chinese folklore in the *Journal of American Folklore* entitled “Customs of the Chinese in America” (Culin 1890b). Two years later, the Chinese in Boston were recognized as a folk group by Mary Chapman who carefully described the everyday life of Chinese residents of an American city (Chapman 1892). *California Folklore Quarterly* (renamed *Western Folklore*),

published Chinese folklore in Southwest United States, especially in California. Shih-Hsiang Chen collected Cantonese riddles in 1940s (Chen 1947); Jon Lee shared some stories about the origins of some customs practiced by Chinese in California (Lee 1943); C. Grant Loomis (1946) described Chinese lore of Nevada collected by some journalists during the period of 1867-1878; Mimi Clar recorded Chinese New Year celebrations and customs in the city of San Francisco (Clar 1958); and William Hoy comprehensively introduced traditional Chinese festivals celebrated in California to American readers (Hoy 1948).

In addition to the above works, there were collections of Cantonese folksongs in California. These collections challenged any assumption that there was no literary activity among early Chinese immigrants. For example, in 1980, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island* presented translations of poems found on the walls of the barracks of Angel Island, an immigrant processing center in the San Francisco area till 1940 (Lai 1980). Another outstanding folksong collection titled *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown* was compiled by Marlon Kau Hom. Hom selected 200 songs out of 1640 published songs associated with the Chinese American experience (Hom 1987). He also examined folksongs from various sources and claimed that they served as an ethnic asylum that allowed lonely Chinese immigrants to regain a sense of belonging (Hom 1983).

Analytical interpretations of Chinese cultural activities are another part of the study of Chinese folklore. Lily Tso Wong's study explores how Chinese legends, supernatural beliefs and other folkloric traditions interact with Chinese healing practices, such as shamanic rituals, acupuncture and herbal medicine in the Bay Area of San Francisco (Wong 1992). Her work suggests the important role of folklore and folklife in contemporary Chinese medical practices in urban and foreign contexts. Cathleen Cloud Wilson's M.A. thesis "The Mother's Voice: A

Folkloric Analysis of Amy Tan's 'The Joy Luck Club'" examines how Amy Tan, an author of Chinese descent, uses oral tradition along with other folkloric devices from the Chinese storytelling tradition in her literary writing (Wilson 1997). Wong's and Wilson's studies indicate the influence of old Chinese traditions on immigrants and their descendants in new social and cultural circumstances.

Others focus on how tradition is negotiated and adapted in innovative ways in a new environment. Ben Seng Hoe's *Structural Changes of Two Chinese Communities in Alberta* analyses the changes in social history and folklore in Alberta's Chinese communities (Hoe 1976). Madeline Anita Slovenz-Low studied traditional Cantonese lion dance performances in order to understand the social life of the Chinese community in New York City from an outsider's point of view (Slovenz-Low 1987, 1991, 1994). She argues that the lion dance is a "truly popular contemporary Cantonese American performance expression that is practiced by Chinese immigrants and fully acculturated American-born Chinese" instead of as "an exotic remnant from China's feudalistic past." (Slovenz-Low 1994, xiii) This finding can be applied to many other examples of immigrants' cultural practices in their new countries. Margret Rose Wei Wah Chan looks at four major traditional Chinese festivals, namely Chinese New Year, Dragon Boat Festival, Moon Festival (in her term, the Mid-Autumn Festival) and the Dong Festival in Toronto's Chinese community (Margret Rose Wai Wah Chan 2001). She probes the internal dynamics of Chinese diasporic groups and explores the tensions that they encounter. According to Chan, cultural performances in various traditional festivals provide these immigrants and their descendants with opportunities to present and negotiate their ethnicity and to release, if not dissolve, social or cultural tensions in cross-cultural meetings.

Food has been another area of interest. Li Li (2002) questions the authenticity of Chinese food in the American mid-west and illustrates how Chinese restaurants, on the one hand, maintain the cultural meaning of Chinese food and, on the other hand, adjust to cater to American customers. Lily Cho also probes Chinese diasporic foodways in small Canadian towns where Chinese restaurants often serve as intercultural spaces for Chinese to communicate with other ethnic neighbors and to present and negotiate their ethnicity (Cho 2010).

A growing interest in Chinese mortuary practice is reflected in some research. Juwen Zhang's dissertation identifies the structure of Chinese American funeral rituals which play a substantial role in establishing Chinese American identity and transforming Chinese traditions in the American cultural landscape (Zhang 2001). Linda Sun Crowder (2000) demonstrates how the Chinese in San Francisco's Chinatown negotiate their "Chineseness" through ritualistic behaviors at funerals, which is the scene constructed by both Chinese traditional and American cultural elements. Her ideas about the construction of Chinese American identity through funeral performance in Chinatown is developed in her 2002 PhD dissertation (Crowder 2002). Different from Zhang and Crowder who are interested in personal mortuary activities, in her article "Through the Lens of the Grave Custom: the public and private face of the Western Manitoban Restaurant," Alison R. Marshall looks at how Chinese present and negotiate their ethnic identity in a public grave custom to commemorate community ancestors and leaders (Marshall 2011b).

Finally, in recent years, Chinese diaspora and their musical and theatrical practice in overseas Chinese communities have been well examined by some ethnomusicologists such as Nancy Yunhwa Rao (2000 and 2002) and Su Zhang (2010). These authors explore how music and other cultural performances are used by Chinese Americans to present their transnational and

racialized diasporic experience and claim their cultural identity in the locally cultural, social and political context.

Folklore and Ethnicity

As a cultural group in the North American ethnic mosaic, the Chinese have a lot in common with other immigrant groups in terms of carrying on their ancestral cultures. Ethnicity has been woven into the study of folklore ever since the inception of the discipline. When the American Folklore Society was formed in 1888, one of its principal tasks was to collect “the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America, namely: (a) Relics of Old English Folk-Lore (ballads, tales, superstitions, dialect, etc.); (b) Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union; (c) Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America (myth, tales, etc.); (d) Lore of French Canada, Mexico, etc” (American Folklore Society 1888, 3). Therefore, during the first stage of folklore studies in North America, the task of most folklorists was to document the old world’s “survivals” which are termed as “folklore in America” by Richard Dorson (Dorson 1978). Although the premise that ethnic heritage is in danger of being lost and that folklore is about collecting cultural survivals is out-of-date in today’s disciplinary discourse, many folklorists still document and analyze the cultural legacy of ethnic groups. Instead of reviewing all of these studies, I will touch on several theoretical frameworks and methodologies to come out of this literature that are related to my exploration of Chinese in Newfoundland.

In 1959 Dorson raised a set of questions to guide folklorists in the field of ethnic folklore: “What happens to the inherited traditions of European and Asiatic folk after they settle in the United States and learn a new language and new ways? How much of the old lore is retained and transmitted to their children? What parts are sloughed off, what intrusions appear, what

accommodation is made between Old Country beliefs and the American physical scene? These are the large questions that confront the assessor of immigrant folk traditions” (Dorson 1977, 135-136). Dorson urged folklorists to focus on the role of folklore in the American context and as part of inter-ethnic communication (“American folklore” or ethnic folklore) rather than old world’s survivals. In response to Dorson’s call, studies of ethnicity and acculturation emerged. Robert A Georges’s study on Greeks in Tarpon Springs, Florida (Georges 1962, 1964 and 1965), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s research with the Jewish community in Toronto (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1972 and 1974), Robert Klymasz’s work on Ukrainians in Canada (see bibliography) are three examples. These folklorists, among others, began to identify patterns that shape the acculturation process and they created transgenerational models to better help understand cultural adaptation.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett summarized three stages that immigrant groups may pass through: immigrant, transitional, and ethnic. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argued:

the immigrant stage is characterized by the difficulty of adjusting to totally new surroundings, and narratives deal with such topics as culture shock, name changing, linguistic and cultural unintelligibility, social blunders, extreme poverty, and the eccentricities of immigrant characters. The second stage is demarcated by ambivalence which is created by the fact that the immigrant is no longer a greenhorn, but yet is not quite an acculturated ethnic....In the ethnic stage, the immigrant has integrated himself into the dominant society but begins to wonder whether it was worth sacrificing his Jewishness [ethnic background] in order to obtain his goals. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1972, 225-313)

Writing at the same time as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Robert B. Klymasz described the evolution of immigrant folklore as a “conventional route marked by a sequence of three stages: resistance (to change), breakdown (due to change), and reconstitution (adjustment to change)” (Klymasz 1973, 134). While both adaptive models illustrate the process of immigrant groups transforming themselves into ethnic groups and attempt to explain how inter-generational members of ethnic

groups in a multicultural society experience ethnicity, they are not as universal as their authors seemed to claim. Not only are they limited by being based largely on the “melting pot” theory, and built mainly on the experience of groups with so-called “White ethnicity” (Alba 1990) instead of those labeled as “visible minorities,” the models do not account for the possibility that the social adaptation of immigrant groups is not always linear and evolutionary but more often might be circular or move back and forth between claiming the mainstream identity and presenting their “real” ethnic origins. Linda Dégh asserts, “the ethnic group is an open system of social interactions and strings of cultural traditions manifested in dynamic processes of growth and decay, always on the move” (Dégh 1974[1969], 53).

Whatever their limitations, these early acculturative models represent the shift that Dorson called for; they reflect the move of American ethnic folklore scholarship from a preoccupation with identifying old world’s survivals to what Alan Dundes called interpretation (Dundes 1980). As the acculturation models suggest, in this stage scholars started to look at how ethnic groups preserve their culture and negotiate their ethnicity, as well as to develop theoretical frameworks to explain them. Importantly, they began to realize that ethnicity is constructed and manipulated against a cross-cultural background where ethnic boundaries are defined by both members and outsiders through cultural expressions and performances. An early example is William Hugh Jansen’s classic “The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore” (1959) that emphasized the complexities of inter-group boundary making and maintenance. Later Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett highlighted the interaction between cultural diversity and self-reflexivity as a special facet of the ethnic folklore studies (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983). It is a theme explored by many of the articles in the 1977 special issue of *Western Folklore*, “Studies in Folklore and Ethnicity,”

edited by Larry Danielson. They analyze various social occasions and cultural events in which ethnicity is both shaped and expressed through constant negotiation and renegotiation.

When folklorists realized the fluidity of ethnicity in different social settings, or in other words, that ethnicity is situational, they started to reassess the importance of the participation of individuals in ethnic interactions. Richard Bauman's (1977) emphasis on "performance" and Dan Ben-Amos's redefinition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1971, 13) reflected a change from conceptualizing folklore studies as group-centered studies to a focus on more individual and situational occasions. Shalom Staub (1989) argued that ethnic meanings often emerge at the margins and between groups (also through individuals eventually) in social communication rather than automatically occurring in a particular person without social contexts.

Following the shift of academic frameworks, articles in *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life* (1991) compiled by Stephen Stern and John Allan Cicala, considered the negotiation of ethnic experience and identity as a dynamic personal process (Stern and Cicala 1991). Larry Danielson wrote, "Ethnicity ... includes a sense of personal survival in the historical continuity of the group" (Danielson 1991, 200). His words mark the spirit of this entire collection in which writers demonstrated how individual affiliation to ethnicity relies on personal choices and strategies in different social situations. More recently, folklorists have shown more interest in the personal choices individuals make when identifying their ethnicities. Concepts such as full-time and part-time ethnicity (Fleras and Elliott 1996) and new ethnicity (Nahachewsky 2002) emerged under the rubric of Ronald Cohen's (1978) "situational identity" theory to describe an individual's own perception and subjective choices concerning their ethnicity that are influenced by various social conditions. At the beginning of the twenty-first

century, Michael Owen Jones continuously encouraged more scholars to conduct research on individuality: “while many researchers are concerned with group practices, collective identity and cultural institutions, I prefer to examine tradition as symbolic construction in the activities and lifestyle of an individual who intentionally selects elements of what he or she conceives to be a tradition in order to fashion an identity articulated through various media” (Jones 2000a, 120).

Multidisciplinary views of ethnicity

Before describing my own approach, I want to touch on several influential works from other disciplines that have shaped the folkloristic study of ethnicity in general and my work in particular. Definitions of ethnicity come from two distinct perspectives: primordialism (eg Clifford Geertz 1963) or instrumentalism. According to Marcus Banks, “the primordialist position would hold that ethnicity is an innate aspect of human identity. It is a given, requiring description rather than explanation. At the other end of the scale, the instrumentalist position (known sometimes as the ‘circumstantialist’ approach [Volkman 1984:152]) would hold that ethnicity is an artifact, created by individuals or groups to bring together a group of people for some common purpose” (Banks 1996, 38).

Researchers like Karen Blu (1980), Charles Tilly (1978) and Rogers Brubaker (2004) attempted to take both aspects into consideration and termed that all factors, no matter given or invented, were “categorical commonalities.” However, because individuals have the free will to change their primordial or instrumental traits to either accept or reject the assigned identity, sometimes it is difficult to identify personal ethnicity through categorical commonalities. Name-changing provides a good example to demonstrate personal choice in the creation of identities.

As Anselm L. Strauss stresses, names are used to represent an individual as a person and are significant to shaping one's identity (Strauss 1997). Based on this acknowledgement, Strauss discusses how the changes of name recreate new identities, as he says, "[t]he phenomena of 'passing' is often marked by name-changing; you disguise who you were or are in order to appear what you wish to be" (Strauss 1997, 18). Strauss continues, "New names also mark passage to new self-images. Conversion, religious or otherwise, is often marked by a complete change of name" (Strauss 1997, 19). For instance, Leonard Brown and others found that Jews often changed their names in order to change their identity because names were thought to be reliable cues to Jewish identity (Brown et. al. 1955).

Donald Horowitz argues that "where ethnic identity is significant in social life, passing is never easy" (1985, 49). This assertion links to the second strategy used by ethnicity researchers to label personal identity: relational connectedness. As many social network researchers have contended, relational connectedness is more substantial and fundamental than subjectively or objectively defined ethnic commonalities (for example, see Bott 1971, Scott 1991, Stewart 1988, Wasserman and Faust 1994, and White and Johansen 2004). Drawing on social network theory, Charles Tilly (1996: 7) defines the term "identity" as "an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative." According to Tilly, identity can be only represented and understood at the collective rather than individual level. I agree that social connections or relational connectedness are significant to a community, especially if we perceive community in the sense of Benedict Anderson (1983), who argued that individuals without face-to-face interaction, even those in geographical distance, are connected by various ties such as religion, literature and mass media.

In many cases, however, the identity determined by relational connectedness is extremely unstable and fragile so that Herbert Gans coined a term “symbolic ethnicity” to refer to this phenomenon (1979). Gans calls this type of expression of ethnic identity as “ethnicity of the last resort” and suggested it is mainly a matter of feeling ethnic rather than actually being ethnic (Gans 1979, 1). Despite its shortcomings, symbolic ethnicity recognizes a personal orientation to one’s identity. From this perspective it is not “groupness” that forces individuals to obey the commonly held rules of any particular group. Rather, it is the reverse. That is to say, it is unreliable to use a pre-perceived sense of groupness or ethnic “stereotypes” to predict an individual’s daily practice.

Brubaker stresses the notion of ethnic individuality that he terms “ethnicity without group” (Brubaker 2004). Brubaker was not the first scholar to realize that individuals as active tradition bearers understand, manipulate, accept or reject their own ethnicity. The fluidity, dynamics and variation of individual expression of personal ethnicity was also recognized by some earlier researchers. For instance, Herbert Gans sees individuals as creative social actors with a greater capacity to control their own identities than any external forces (Gans 1979). Richard Alba’s findings in his study on White Americans also recognize one’s personal volition to adjust individual ethnicity in different social situations (Alba 1990). He notes, “Ethnic identity is, in all its ramifications, a choice by an individual, even if there are social influences on that choice It is not only that individuals can choose to identify or not, and choose also precisely which elements in an ancestry mixture to emphasize and how important an ethnic identity should be for them, but they also have a wide latitude of choice when it comes to the manifestations or expressions of ethnicity” (Alba 1990, 303).

Terry Huffman writes that in everyday cultural practice, “some individuals may feel a strong attachment and identity with their ethnic group while others express very little” (Huffman 2008, 66). To explain this, Ashley Doane explores how social context and the increasing international and domestic power of post-war America stimulated the revival of the American White ethnicity (1997). Although she focuses on the personal choice of ethnicity among White Americans, the so-called dominant group in her words, her ideas about how external factors such as the size of the group, the power of this group and the social environment influence the strength of personal ethnicity are instructive to investigate the experience of the “visible minorities” (Doane 1997). When these external factors are internalized into the cognitive process of individual self-identification, they become the senses of belonging.

All of these works inform my thesis. In turn, I hope that my study of the Chinese in Newfoundland might contribute to this literature and add to the understanding of the overseas Chinese experience, especially in the Canadian context.

Methodologies and Resources

Much of the information in this thesis comes from interviews I recorded with Chinese-Newfoundland residents. From 2009 until present, I conducted recorded interviews with eighty Chinese residents of Newfoundland and Labrador (including three Caucasians who are closely associated with Chinese) and have had many informal conversations with them regarding their life and experiences. My informants include first generation immigrants such as Chinese restaurant owners and/or chefs (25 individuals), Chinese professionals (32 individuals, mainly, professors, researchers, medical specialists/paramedics and engineers) and some new landed immigrants, who have been in Newfoundland after 2000 (10 individuals), as well as second-or

later-generation people of Chinese descent (14 individuals). My interviewees have various linguistic (mainly Toisanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien and English) and regional backgrounds (mainland Chinese including Canton or Guangdong province, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asian countries and Canada) but they all claim themselves as Chinese or people of Chinese descent. Although not exclusive, the following table shows the diversity of my research participants.

Surname	Given Name	Birthplace	Mother Tongue	Occupation	Immigration Time to NL	Sex
Au 区	George	Canton	Toisanese	Restaurant	1949	M
Au 区	Navy	Stephenville	Toisanese/ English	Restaurant	Local born	M
Chan 陈	Mark	Hong Kong	English	Student	1987	M
Chen 陈	Philip	Canton	Cantonese	Restaurant	1989	M
Chi 池	Bing Sun	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1989	M
Feng 冯	Stephen	Canton	Cantonese	Professional	2007	M
Fong 方	Linda	Botwood	English	Professional	Local Born	F

Hing 區	Peter	Canton	Toisanese	Restaurant / Professional	1958	M
Hong 熊	Billy	Canton	Toisanese	Restaurant	1953	M
Hong 熊	Kim	Canton	Toisanese	Professional	1950	M
Hong 熊	Lam	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1968	F
Hong 熊	Wallace	Canton	Toisanese	Restaurant	1949	M
Hsu 徐	Tzu-hao	Taiwan	Mandarin/ Hokkien	Professional	1994	F
Huang 黃	Katherine	Taiwan	Mandarin/ Hokkien	Professional	1974	F
Huang 黃	Rex	Taiwan	Mandarin	Restaurant	2008	M
Hwang 黃	Shinn Jia	Taiwan	Mandarin/ Hokkien	Professional	1968	M
Jin 甄	Gordon	Canton	Toisanese/ English	Professional	Local Born	M

Lau 刘	Michael	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional	1984	M
Lau 刘	Joshua	St. John's	English	Student	Local born	M
Law 罗	Peter	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional/ Restaurant	1988	M
Leung 梁	Arthur	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional	1970	M
Li 李	Cody	Canton	Cantonese	Restaurant	2010	M
Li 李	Tina	Canton	Cantonese	Restaurant	1999	F
Lin 林	Ching Hsiang	Taiwan	Mandarin/ Hokkien	Housewife	1971	F
Liu 刘	Pengfei	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1989	M
Long 龙	Wendy	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Housewife	1988	F
Ma 马	Lan	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	2006	F

Mo 莫	Joseph	Canton	Cantonese	Restaurant	2006	M
Pan 潘	Zachery	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1999	M
Ping 司徒	Bill	St. John's	English	Professional	Local born	M
Ping 司徒	Violet (White)	St. John's	English	Professional	Local born	F
Ping Jr. 司徒	William	St. John's	English	Student	Local born	M
Shieh 谢	John	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1988	M
Snook	Charlie	Grand Bank	English	Professional	Local Born	M
So 苏	Justin	St. John's	English	Professional	Local born	M
So 苏	Rennies	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1983	M
Soo 谭	May	Grand Falls	English	Restaurant	Local born	F

Soo 宿	Norman	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Clergy	2006	M
Tam 譚	Amy (white)	Grand Falls	English	Substitute Teacher	Local Born	F
Tam 譚	Betty	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1972	F
Tam 譚	Chan Chau	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1972	M
Tam 譚	Francis	Corner Brook	Cantonese/ English	Restaurant	Local born	M
Tam 譚	Hang Mei	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1987	F
Tam 譚	Hum Ying	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Grocery Store	1987	F
Tam 譚	Simon	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional	1974	M
Tam 譚	Tommy	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Restaurant	1974	M
Tan 陈	Chin	Malaysia	Hokkien	Professional	1973	M
Tan 譚	Jackie (Hong	Canton	Cantonese	Restaurant	1995	M

	Shun)					
Tjan 曾	E.T.	Indonesia	Hokkien	Professional	1966	M
Tsui 徐	Alick	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional	1986	M
Wang 王	Hong	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1992	M
Wang 王	Lili	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1994	F
Wang 王	Shengli	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1989	F
Wang 汪	Yang	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	Unknown	M
Wong 王	Daniel	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Professional	1968	M
Wong 黄	Kenny	Hong Kong	English	Restaurant	Unknown	M
Wong 黄	Peter	St. John's	English	Professional	Local born	M
Wu 吴	Zoe	Taiwan	Mandarin	Restaurant	1992	F

Xiao 萧	Lihua	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	1989	F
Xie 谢	Jerry	St. John's	English	Student	Local born	M
Yang 杨	Lewis	St. John's	English	Professional	Local Born	M
Yeh 叶	Chien- Ming	Taiwan	Mandarin/ Hokkien	Restaurant	2008	M
Yip 叶	Lat	Vietnam	Cantonese	Martial Artist	Never	M
Zhao 赵	Ye	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Restaurant/ Grocery Store	Unknown	M
Zhao 赵	Yuming	China (not Canton)	Mandarin	Professional	2004	M

*Table 1: Information of My Principal Research Participants
(Surnames are written in simplified Chinese)*

Some of my research participants are loosely connected by kinship, like the Hongs who were originally from the Hong villages in southern Canton Province (Toisan). These surname clans are more common in the immigrant groups that came to Newfoundland prior to 1960s from southern part of China, mainly Canton Province. Some of the Tams are connected; Chan Chau Tam, Hang Mei Tam, Hum Ying Tam and Simon Tam are siblings, but they have no direct relationship with people like May Soo (who was a Tam before marriage) and Francis Tam, who

are connected in terms of region of origin. Others in this thesis with common Chinese surnames like So, Wang, Wong and Zhao are not associated.

Because of differences of languages and regions, the same surname in Chinese writing can be spelled differently in English. For example, Wang in Mandarin is spelled as Wong in Cantonese and Yeh in Taiwanese Mandarin is spelled as Yip by Vietnamese Chinese. Moreover, individuals from the same region speaking the same language may also spell their surnames differently. For instance, in Taiwan, Hwang (Shinn Jia Hwang) and Huang (Rex Huang and Katherine Huang) are the same in Chinese. In other cases, different surnames are spelled similarly the same due to the same pronunciation. For example, Wong in Cantonese represents two surnames (王[King] and 黃[Yellow]). Daniel Wong's Wong, representing "King" is different from Peter Wong's Wong, which means "Yellow" in Chinese. In the case of Yang Wang, his surname Wang is not the same as Lili Wang's because their written names and tones of pronunciations in Chinese are different. In this thesis, I am not going to change any names to follow either Mandarin or dialectic standards but keep them as they are translated in English. In the case of John Shieh, his surname was self-invented for the convenience of non-Chinese to pronounce.

Sometimes, individuals' English surnames are completely different from their Chinese surnames. For example, Bill Ping's last name "Ping" is not a traditional Chinese surname and his surname in Chinese is Seto (or Szeto 司徒). The surname "Ping" came from his father William Ping, who did not change his Chinese name Seto Ping to conform to the English. Therefore, people mistakenly dropped the real surname Seto and considered Ping as his surname, which was

used in various documents. The story of Peter Hing is similar to Ping's. Furthermore, some of my informants prefer me to use their English names and I have followed their wishes.

In this thesis, I transcribed my interviews. Some interviews were conducted in Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese), which I translated into English. When the translation was finished, I often checked with my interviewees to see if I had changed their original meanings. Sometimes, they would change some of their words in the English version or add some new thoughts which were not recorded in the interviews. In other cases, interviews were conducted in English. Because the informants were not native English speakers, they made obvious grammatical errors, which I corrected to follow English standards.

Many of the interviews were carried out as part of projects supported by various sponsors. My first opportunity to conduct research in this area arose when Dr. Beverley Diamond launched her project, *St. John's Many Voices*, under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place. The goal of *Many Voices* was to document the ethnic diversity of St. John's as well as to promote multiculturalism regionally and nationally. The intended audience included not only residents of this province, but also, or more importantly, potential immigrants and tourists. As a graduate research assistant, I actively participated in this project from April 2009 to December 2010. Because of my cultural background, I was encouraged to mainly focus on the Chinese community in St. John's and so I conducted fieldwork with and wrote ethnographical reports about residents who were from various provinces in mainland China, Taiwan, Southeast Asian countries and other places around the world. This project allowed me to discover the existence of many of hybrid traditions such as foodways, festival celebrations, dance and other ethnic activities beneath the superficial cultural homogeneity. My fieldwork taught me that, for first and later generation Chinese, the experience in Newfoundland is more personal and

situational than collective or prescribed due to the esoteric and exoteric perceptions of individuals to themselves and others. The materials gathered for the *St. John's Many Voices* project and relationships I established during the project formed the foundation for my current study on this community.

When I was working for the *St. John's Many Voices* project and afterwards, I launched several other projects in order to gather more information about the daily life of Chinese residents. My first self-directed project, *Sacred Narratives: Chinese Christians in Newfoundland* (funded by Mary Griffins Bursary), inspired my ideas about the heterogeneity of Chinese in Newfoundland and Labrador; *The Chinese in Newfoundland: Investigating the Collections of Canadian Museum of Civilization* (funded by J.R. Smallwood Foundation), allowed me to survey materials outside of Newfoundland; my project entitled *Cultural Performance: Chinese Lion Dance in Newfoundland* (funded by ISER), focused on the history and performance of the Lion Dance in the province; and finally, my investigation of the status of mental health among Chinese students at Memorial University (funded by Canadian Mental Health Association Newfoundland and Labrador Division) provided me with a completely new angle to approach understanding how culture influences the everyday practice of Chinese residents in this province and how their traditions have shaped their narratives of immigration and acculturation. In addition to these projects, I conducted further ethnographic research in order to comprehensively understand the cultural practices of the community.

Besides interviews, I relied on the established folkloristic ethnographic practice of participant observation and immersion in the community to develop the thesis's ideas and analysis. Since April 2009, I have attended almost all Chinese-related social and cultural events in St. John's. From September 2009 to its closure in April 2010, I taught at the St. John's

Chinese Language School. I also regularly attend Sunday services in both the Gower Street United Church and the St. John's Chinese Christian Church and take part in most of their special gatherings. From January 2010 to October 2011, I served as the president of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association and organized two well-attended Chinese New Year shows on campus. In order to understand Chinese foodways in Newfoundland and get in touch with more Chinese families on a daily basis, in July 2010, I started to work as a part-time waiter at the Magic Wok Eatery, the most popular Chinese restaurant in St. John's.

In addition to recorded interviews and participant observation, this thesis also draws on published and archival materials as well as architectures and material objects. Published written sources include the publications of Chinese organizations in Newfoundland such as the Chinese Student Society of Memorial University (1975), the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (1978, 1995 and 2007) and local newspapers (eg *The (Evening) Telegram*, *Daily News and Evening Herald*). Unpublished manuscripts include recollections by local Chinese (see Ping) and archival materials including Ban Seng Hoe's collection at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (renamed Canadian Museum of History), Ottawa, the "Chinese in Newfoundland" vertical file in the Center for Newfoundland Studies of the Queen Elizabeth II Library of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Chinese-related materials kept in the archive of the Gower Street United Church. Margaret Chan's recordings of interviews with Chinese in St. John's during the period between September 2003 and February 2004 also provided me with useful information of contemporary Chinese life in Newfoundland (materials are available at the Center for the Study of Music, Media and Place, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

Some part of my study relies particularly heavily on local newspapers. In light of the absence of oral history, the continuous and detailed journalistic reports on various aspects -

political, social, economic and cultural - of the life of Chinese in Newfoundland since they came in 1890s is particularly useful. Journalists reported on many types of Chinese activity, important and trivial. They interviewed people and documented both everyday and festive experiences of the ethnic group. For these reasons, Ellen Litwicki calls “the popular press” “the best window” to look at ethnic practices which might not be accessible to many researchers due to temporal-spatial reasons and other limitations (Litwicki 2000, 5).

In the historical part of the thesis, information from publications might seem more dominant than recorded interviews. As just mentioned, this is first because of the absence of oral history in early periods. Secondly, in a few cases, during my interviews, informants often read out of published materials they collected in the past to prove their accuracy so that their narratives and the printed stories overlapped. Thirdly, some interviews were conducted in Chinese and some interviewees preferred using available corresponding English written materials to present their points of view. Fourthly, in very few cases, detailed journalistic reports which shared the same idea of the brief descriptions of interviewees were chosen in order to better support my arguments. However, as rich as these resources might be, one must also exercise caution when consulting them. In the early days, especially during the exclusion era (1906-1949), newspaper descriptions were distorted. For example, Krista Chatman Li discusses the critical role of three of the most important newspapers in the St John’s area—*The Evening Telegram* (later *The Telegram*), *The Evening Herald* and *The Daily News*--during the early years of Chinese settlement in creating a public image of Chinese as “economic, moral and social threats” (Li 2010, 235). The limitations of newspaper reports prompted Margaret Chang to comment, “Sadly, sometimes the only documentation available from sources like newspapers refers mostly to conflicts. For the warmth of human relationships between Newfoundlanders and Chinese it is

necessary to rely more heavily on interviews.” (Chang, 1978, “Chinese Come to Newfoundland,” *Evening Telegram*, February 11, 1978) Fortunately after the repeal of the Chinese immigration act in 1949, media reports on the Chinese generally offer a less biased and more trustworthy picture; however, they are still used cautiously and contextually.

Reflections on my Fieldwork

Conducting successful fieldwork research is never an easy task. Margret Julian Thomson, a New Zealand student who came to Newfoundland in the late 1980s to study folklore, wrote about Chinese festive customs for her MA thesis. She noted that the difficulties she confronted in arranging interviews were due to her identity as a non-Chinese. Her potential interviewees were often unwilling to share their stories with her (Thomson 1993, 113-114). Before I entered the field, I considered myself as an insider with the same racial and cultural background as my informants and the ability to speak their languages: Mandarin, Cantonese or English. However, when I started to contact the potential subjects and received no warmer a reception than Thomson, I was forced to re-examine my initial, over-confident claim to be an “insider.”

In reflecting on her fieldwork in Mexico, Olga Najara-Ramirez recalls her everlastingly shifting status as researcher that moved between outsider and insider. She notes:

one’s status in a community is not fixed but dynamic, fluid, and even multiple depending on a variety of factors. In everyday interactions in the field, as various situations emerge, certain aspects of one’s identity become more salient, others more silenced or reduced insignificant. With boundaries continually shifting along various axes (class, gender, age, occupation, religious affiliation, and so on), the ‘insider/outsider’ distinction changes according to the specific context of interaction. (Najara-Ramirez 1999, 186)

Najara-Ramirez’s words suggest that researchers should not take their status as an insider for granted because membership is not gained by birth but determined by members of the group

based on their perceptions on you and your behaviours. Furthermore, in many cases, an ethnic community labelled by outsiders as homogeneous is often divided into various sub-groups with their own ways of connection. Therefore, the membership in one or several sub-groups does not guarantee a researcher access to all sub-divisions in the community. In fact, if there are tensions, just the opposite may occur if one is too closely aligned with a particular section. Najara-Ramirez challenges fieldworkers not “to reduce a community into a homogeneous group with a single vision” (Najara-Ramirez 1999, 186). However, while she argues that “such a narrow representation is as unfair as it is unreal,” she argues that “it is nonetheless impossible to report all points of views discovered in the field” (Najara-Ramirez 1999, 186).

I was aware of the intra-group diversity that characterizes the broader Chinese community in Newfoundland when I began my study but I was unprepared for how differently each group would treat me after my “invasion” into their circles as a researcher rather than a potential member. The St. John’s Chinese Christian Church was the first destination of my research because some of my friends, who regularly participated in its activities, agreed to be my guide. In addition to the invitation from some insiders, another reason drove me to go to the church at the beginning of my research. This was the spring season. April is a quiet month for the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Chinese Students and Scholars Association, whose events are normally held in the late summer or winter, and I was looking for activities I could participate in and potentially document. I was warmly welcomed by the people, especially the elders of the church as a potential candidate to be converted to Christianity. I was asked to join in their Bible study groups to meet people in a more private space and learn more about the Bible.

In retrospect, I realize that I made a mistake not to fully explain from the onset the real goal of my visit to the church leaders, particularly to one very conservative elder. It was a hard lesson and he called me “spy” after a Bible study meeting on one Friday night in early May because I was chatting with his wife about the history of the Chinese Language School of which he was a former principal. He got very angry and told me not to attend bible study meetings and church services as a researcher in the future. The benefit of this incident was that it made me very aware of my interviewees’ experience of my research and I tried my best to respect their religious beliefs. I also learned to clearly communicate my research goals and to attain people’s consent before asking questions or even chatting when it was related to my study. Fortunately my research did not end with my rocky start. Another elder in the church was more open-minded and invited me to join his Mandarin group which included members who were mainly Mandarin-speaking Chinese from Mainland China. Their post-Bible study conversations became one of my important sources of information. However, the different attitudes towards my research expressed by these two elders and their groups was an invaluable early learning experience and encouraged me to pay attention to the subgroups in the local Chinese community from the beginning of my fieldwork.

After my cool reception from the elder at the St. John’s Chinese Christian Church, I stopped attending Sunday services there and started to go to the Gower Street United Church. Gower Street is a local church with strong connections to some long-established Chinese families. At the Gower Street United Church, I established a very strong relationship with my most important informant, Kim Hong, a Chinese power broker or gatekeeper in the sense of Lisa Mar (2010). Hong, a retired director of the Cancer Clinic at the St. John’s General Hospital, came to Newfoundland from Canton, China in 1950 when he was 13 years old. Before his arrival, his

grandfather settled down in St. John's in 1910 and brought his father to Newfoundland in 1931.

Kim Hong was an early (if not the first) Chinese graduate from Memorial University, the founder of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, and one of the founders of the Newfoundland and Labrador Multiculturalism and Folk Arts Council. As an active member and key contact in the Chinese community, Kim Hong has been consulted by many researchers interested in the Chinese in Newfoundland so that his name has appeared in many published works. As a matter of fact, before starting my fieldwork, based on my intensive library and archival research, I had realized that Kim Hong was a key person in the community. On May 2, 2009, I first met Kim Hong at a multicultural party hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Multiculturalism and Folk Arts Council at the branch 56 Royal Canadian Legion. My visit to the Sunday service of the Gower Street United Church refreshed his memory of me.

Just as he helped other scholars gain access to members of the community, Hong willingly introduced me to other Chinese residents, most of them old timers, who were from Canton and came to Newfoundland before Confederation. They and their descendants provided me with information about the Chinese community. In addition, in May 2009, Kim Hong began to give me a lift every Sunday morning to the church service and we therefore had many opportunities to talk about the historical and contemporary Chinese community in Newfoundland. Eventually I became good friends with Kim Hong and his family. These interactions provided me with a closer look at the daily life of some Chinese residents which I came to see as a life characterized by tensions between cultural maintenance and acculturation.

In addition to the invaluable help from Kim Hong, my own working experience as a part-time waiter at the Magic Wok Eatery also considerably assisted me in developing my social network in the Chinese community and to connect to those non-Chinese restaurant patrons who

also had many stories about the Chinese in Newfoundland. My association with Magic Wok began in the summer of 2009 when I first visited to the restaurant to set up an interview with the owner, Rennies So for the *St. John's Many Voice* Project. The interview with So went well and I also started to get to know other people in the restaurant such as Hang Mei Tam (partner of So) and Zoe Wu (daughter-in-law of Tam). A year after, in the summer of 2010, through my friend Su Xiao, I learned that an employment opportunity was open at the restaurant. With my doctoral thesis in mind, I decided to apply for the job. Fortunately, because of the good first impression I had made in 2009 and the sporadic interaction I had with Tam and So during the year and my Cantonese fluency, I was hired even though I had no experience working in a restaurant. Working in a popular Chinese restaurant provided me with opportunities to both observe and become interested in Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. I worked alongside and listened to chefs' stories of Chinese food and Chinese restaurants. As a complete outsider, I never could have gained either thesis materials or a degree of cultural fluency. However, through my strong connection with the owners who were well connected to the local Chinese community, I was able to establish personal relationships with many Chinese regular customers, such as Arthur Leung, Chin Tan, E.T. Tjan, Alick Tsui, Lili Wang and her husband Hu Liu, who all eventually became my important informants. The Magic Wok Eatery is also a popular culinary destination for many non-Chinese customers, some of whom actually have had a great deal of interaction with the local Chinese community over the years. Some information in this thesis is gathered from the conversations with these customers. For example, a regular client David Murphy, who knew about my research project from our conversations, gave me some books; in one the connection between the early Chinese community and the KMT (Chinese Nationalist League or Kuomintang) was mentioned.

Good rapport is key to successful fieldwork; the relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee is not as simple as that of a receiver and a sender. Many fieldwork textbooks instruct that listening is very important when interviewing and that researchers should treat their informants as students treat their teacher (e.g. Bartis 2002[1979], Brunvand 1976, Georges and Jones 1980, Goldstein 1964, Jackson 1986, and, Lindahl and Rikoon 1979). I agree that interviewers should place themselves in a relatively “humble” position. However, in my own fieldwork experience, I found that the relationship between a researcher and an informant often shifted and that overall it resembled a friendly exchange of information. My interviewees often asked me a lot of questions that were not necessarily related to the research topic but concerned my personal life, China, and recent local or global news events. The conversation sometimes transformed me from the interviewer to the interviewee as I tried to cater to my informant’s interest. While in these situations some people might attempt to immediately regain control over the conversation, I tried to allow the other person to direct our talk. I was willing to share information because I believe friendship, and even rapport, should be based on mutual exchange rather than a one-way flow of information. My research taught me that a fieldworker should consider both what s/he can learn from his/her research subjects as well as what s/he is able to contribute not only monetarily but also mentally and emotionally.

Whom I interviewed, as well as how I conducted some interviews, sometimes depended on interpersonal factors. As I mentioned above, I was rejected by some potential informants because of conflicting working schedules or other reasons that I did not anticipate. The Newfoundland Chinese community was a small one but I managed to overcome these initial obstacles. At other times, which were few, I felt uncomfortable around people because of something they said or did and so I chose to avoid personal encounters. In these cases I attempted to gather information

from other similar sources. Sometimes this meant that I would not interview specific individuals but rely on secondary sources—for example interviews other scholars had conducted with them or journalistic reports on the same individual or event. That is another reason to explain why information from publications dominant in a few parts of this thesis. Some people might question my indirect approach and ask: how do you know the findings are not altered or the nuances are in an acceptable range? In response to this potential criticism, I refer to Levi-Strauss and his comments on structuralism. When he was asked how many versions are enough to start a structural analysis, Lévi-Strauss answered that:

at this point the objection may be raised that the task [structural analysis] is impossible to perform, since we can only work with known versions. Is it not possible that a new version might alter the picture? This is true enough if only one or two versions are available, but the objection becomes theoretical as soon as a reasonably large number have been recorded. Let us make this point clear by a comparison. If the furniture of a room and its arrangement were known to us only through its reflection in two mirrors placed on opposite walls, we should theoretically dispose of an almost infinite number of mirror images which would provide us with a complete knowledge. However, should the two mirrors be obliquely set, the number of mirror images would become very small; nevertheless, four or five such images would very likely give us, if not complete information, at least a sufficient coverage so that we would feel sure that no large piece of furniture is missing in our description. (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 218)

According to Levi-Strauss, the meaning of an event is systematically constructed and the structure is not easily altered by a single variant. Therefore, from the structuralist perspective, if a considerable number of similar versions are collected, the importance of some small portion of variation can be tolerated. However, Levi-Strauss also insisted on the quantity of versions: “it cannot be too strongly emphasized that all available variants should be taken into account.” (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 218) Thus, I often adopted the method of participant observation rather than direct interviewing in risky circumstances. Happily, the negative examples such as the

aforementioned church incident were rare. Most of the time, I was fortunate enough to maintain good relationships with my informants.

Fieldwork is complicated and never perfect. As a researcher, I can only see what I can see. Therefore, this fieldwork-based thesis does not attempt to offer a comprehensive description of every aspect of Chinese life in Newfoundland. Rather, it explores fragments of a continuously changing community.

The Map

This thesis is an attempt 1) to document cultural information about the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2) to present Chinese-Newfoundland traditions, both those that were brought here and those that were invented locally, and 3) to interpret some of messages contained in the cultural expressions of members of this diverse group. By identifying both the ethnic ambivalence and the flexibility of personal choices people exercise when confronting identity issues, I try to answer some fundamental questions as follows: What makes individuals “Chinese”? How does Chinese culture change and re-invent itself in a new social and cultural environment? And how do individuals participate in various Chinese cultural events and how do these ethnic presentations influence personal perceptions of “Chineseness” and being Chinese? In addressing these questions, I hope to contribute to the development of a framework for examining ethnicity.

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. In this first chapter, I have briefly shared my own story and introduced the themes and goals of my study of the Chinese in Newfoundland. I posed some of the questions I explore in the thesis and laid the theoretical foundation by offering a brief overview of relevant literature regarding the Chinese in Newfoundland, folklore studies of

Chinese ethnicity, scholarship on ethnic folklore and multi-disciplinary studies of ethnicity.

Finally, I outlined the goals for my study, described my methodology and sources, and reflected on my fieldwork experience.

Chapter Two presents how the Chinese negotiated their ethnicity in the historical context of Newfoundland from their first arrival in 1895 to present day. This chapter attempts to provide a holistic picture of the history of the Chinese in Newfoundland and their transformation from temporary sojourners to permanent settlers as it was shaped by political and social changes via historical accounts and personal narratives. Newfoundland's Confederation to Canada in 1949, the subsequent repeal of the discriminatory Chinese immigration act and the new adoption of new Canadian immigration policy in 1967 were key events to impact the lives of Chinese residents. This chapter also highlights the narratives Chinese immigrants tell about their experiences of immigration and reveals the emergence of Chinese diversity in Newfoundland.

Chapter Three continues the historical narrative begun in Chapter Two and explores how the Chinese organized and continue to organize their social life through social supporting networks. This chapter also explores the intra-group diversity of individuals of Chinese descent, who are different from each other in terms of country of origin, language, occupation, generation and other aspects.

The following three chapters focus on three cultural aspects in order to look at how Chinese diasporic identity is negotiated, constructed and reconstructed via intra-group communication and how that identity is presented to outsiders whose role is also important in creating/discovering Chineseness. In many cases, the meaning of Chineseness at the individual level emerges from the tension between individuals' intentions to fully acculturate and/or to engage in strict cultural preservation. This exploration begins in Chapter Four that examines the

introduction, transformation and acceptance of several traditions of Chinese foodways in Newfoundland. Chapter Five looks at how the most important Chinese festival, Chinese New Year, was/ is celebrated in Newfoundland in the past and nowadays. This chapter intends to describe how an ethnic festival is constructed and imagined in local and multicultural settings. Chapter Six turns to the Chinese lion dance as an example of how a Chinese regional tradition was brought to Newfoundland and used as an ethnic symbol for all Chinese no matter their affiliations to any sub-groups. However, it is also obvious that perceptions of the lion dance are sometimes very different from each other. Chapter Seven presents the conclusions of this thesis. This chapter reviews the key findings and suggests how my academic research might contribute to the social and cultural development of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the 1975 special issue of *Canadian Ethnic Studies* on Ethnic Folklore in Canada, Howard Palmer claims in the preface:

Although its range of articles included here give only a brief glimpse at the range and extent of folklore activity and scholarship in Canada, they do suggest that to dismiss as a relatively unimportant part of ethnic life in Canada, or to consider, as some critics have done, current folklore activity as a trivializing of the real meaning of a multicultural Canada, is to miss two very important facts. First, it misses the important ways in which folklore gives expression to very old and very rich traditions. Second, it underestimates the important role that folklore activities play as a badge of ethnic identity, contributing to the survival of ethnic groups in modern Canada. (Palmer 1975, 4)

Before we start our journey to explore how Palmer's two points apply to the Chinese in Newfoundland, it is important to first outline their history. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

A Better Life: Stories of First, Second and Later Waves of Immigration

*"I object to this bill because it deprives the Chinaman of his right as a man, because **he is a Chinaman**, and because the nation to which he belongs is unable to insist on the rights of its subjects."*

*----T. B. Darby, the Methodist minister in Carbonear, NL
(Evening Herald April 30, 1906)*

"The Chinese people in St. John's are a tremendous people, a part of the city for many years, very diligent taxpayers. If all our people were as good, we'd have no problems."

*----- Dorothy Wyatt, former Mayor of St. John's
(Daily News January 7, 1977)*

Gold Mountain: First Wave Migrants and the Laundry Business

Washee-Washee

In good old days when grandpa lived,
and grandma boiled his deckle white,
And starched it stiff with Colman's best
'till it did shine way out o' sight.
When ruffled bosoms were in vogue,
No patent wringers had we then,
But women washed with tucked-up sleeves
and did the laundry for their men.

But since that time a change has come
and with it Chinese by the score,
One Lung, Sing Lee and Wee Wah Wee,
who wrote inviting fifty more
And soon the town was well supplied
with washee, washee signs hung out,
It seemed as if we had relied too much
on washee washee without doubt.

Some scratched their nose and shook their heads,
and said that they would interfere,
With labourers and artisans and other
workmen 'round here,

So to devise some easy way,
to introduce some simple plan,
Inducing washee to get out and rid us
of the Chinaman.

R. J. P., St. John's
(*Daily News* September 26, 1906)

The history of Chinese community in St. John's dates back to at least the last decade of the nineteenth century. Because the arrival of the first Chinese immigrant has not yet been found in any official documents, it must be based on the oral history accounts which both circulated throughout the local Chinese community and have been published in media reports. Fred Adams, the author of "Interesting People of St. John's," an article published in *Ancestor*, suggests that "a Chinese man was here several years prior to 1895" (Adams 2001, 35). Adams continues, "He supposedly lost his immigration papers in the fire of 1892 and new ones were issued to him a year or so later" (Adams 2001, 35). He describes the first Chinese resident as "Mr. Lim Kin who married a local woman named Catherine Minnet in 1920 and had a large family. There are many descendants of this couple in St. John's. The name was anglicized to Lamkin and the family resided on Murphy's Lane in the Mundy Pond area. Mr. Lamkin or Lim Kin died at the Hoyles Home December 4, 1983 at the amazing age of 112" (Adams 2001, 35).

Another account of the first Chinese immigrant to Newfoundland is more widespread than the story of Mr. Lamkin. According to the memoir of the owner of the last Chinese laundry, William Ping, who came to Newfoundland in 1931, the first two Chinese to come to Newfoundland were Fong Choy and Szeto Hing (Soo-oo-Hin, Sue Hoo Hing, or Wang Chang).⁵ They arrived in Newfoundland from the United States in Mid-August of 1895 to escape the

⁵ In the *Daily News* on August 19th, 1895, his name was called Soo-oo-Hin. Margaret Walsh Chang and Miriam Yu use "Wang Chang" in their article (Cheng 1978, 3; Yu 1986, 19), but John Kenneth Sparrow calls him "Sue Hoo Hing" in his report (Sparrow 2006, 6). They all indicate that this is the person who founded the first Chinese laundry with Fong Choy. The reason for this confusion is likely caused by the pronunciations of different Chinese dialects.

intense racism towards the Chinese. They were originally from the small village of Hoi Ping (Kai Ping) county 开平 of Canton (Guangdong) Province in southern China. Fong Choy was portrayed as an adventurous young man with great ambition who stopped in St. John's on his way to England (Hong et. al. 1975, 9; Ping 1995a; Pitt 1981, 425).⁶

Their decision to stay in Newfoundland is thought to have been triggered by the absence of Chinese. As Kim Hong says, "At the beginning, most Chinese came here for economic reasons. Normally, they would earn some money and probably go back to China. Working in North America may make their life a little bit easier" (Kim Hong 2009). At the turn of the twentieth century, due to the ending of the Gold Rush and the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, many Chinese laborers lost their jobs. To prevent them from competing with white workers, the Chinese were excluded from many mainstream industries and Chinese men were forced to work in some traditionally "feminine" enterprises. In many big cities of North America, Chinese men earned their living mainly by working in hand-washing laundries which were widespread across the continent (Hoe 2003). The absence of any Chinese in St. John's represented a good opportunity for Fong and Szeto to set up business. Because of their previous laundry experience in the United States and other parts of Canada, such as Montreal and Halifax, Fong Choy and Szeto Hing founded the Sing Lee and Co. Chinese Laundry⁷ on August 24, 1895, located at 37 New Gower Street, St. John's. They posted an advertisement in the most influential local newspaper *The Evening Telegram* (now as *The Telegram*):

⁶ Margaret Walsh Chang has a different opinion on Fong Choy's destination. According to her, Fong Choy went to England before his setting out for Canada. She notes: "The story goes that Fong Choy as a young man was very adventurous. After leaving China, he managed to board a ship for England. After episodes in England he set out for Canada and went to Montreal and Halifax." (Chang, "Chinese Come to Newfoundland, *The Evening Telegram* February 11, 1978)

⁷ For the same dialectal reason mentioned above, in other places the "Sung Lee and Co. Chinese Laundry" is known as the "Sing Lee and Co. Chinese Laundry."

Sing Lee and Co. Chinese Laundry will be ready to receive work on Monday at their laundry, 37 New Gower Street, corner Holdsworth Street. (*The Evening Telegram* August 24th, 1895)

This event was also written into the *Notable Events in the History of Newfoundland*, where Fong Choy was identified as the “first Chinamen in the country” (Devine 1900, 159). At the beginning of Chinese immigration to Newfoundland, the arrival of Chinese was somewhat welcome (Chang 1978, 1981).

More Chinese laundries soon followed, especially in St. John’s. The second Chinese laundry was set up in the same year as Fong Choy’s. On October 23, 1895, three Chinese men--Hung Hie Kee, Lung Quon and Sung Dee--started their Kam Lung Laundry at 214 Duckworth Street (*Evening Telegram* October 23, 1895). The opening of two Chinese laundries in two months was a significant achievement by these Chinese newcomers who “were constantly being watched with vigilance” (Yu 1986, 19).

Chinese immigrants continued to set up businesses and more Chinese laundries were successively opened. Au Kim Lee (or Kim Lee Au in the English tradition), who was a Hoi Ping native and the most famous Chinese in Newfoundland in early days, arrived in St. John’s in 1899 (Yu 1986, 20). Due to his previous experience in England, Au Kim Lee was fluent in English so he was able to be the liaison “between the Chinese and locals and Newfoundland institutions such as the justice system, the customs, etc” (Yu 1986, 20). In accordance with Newfoundland immigration policy of the day, in 1905 after he had been in the city for five years, Au Kim Lee became the first naturalized Chinese in Newfoundland before Confederation (Yu 1986, 20; Sparrow 2006, 10).⁸ The details of Au Kim Lee’s career are unknown, but he started the Kim Lee laundry in 1904 which was the third Chinese laundry in St. John’s (Yu 1986, 20).

⁸ However, it is uncertain if he was granted the right to vote.

At the time, all laundry was done by hand so a large number of workers were required to operate a laundry business. Employees were usually relatives or countrymen of laundry owners recruited through the two types of Chinese immigration legal in Canada: coolie broker and chain migration. Wickberg et al write:

Coolie broker immigration usually involved an indenture arrangement by which the immigrant worked off his indebtedness to the broker who had paid his passage from China before he was free to seek employment on his own. ... In chain migration, on the other hand, which was common in Canada after 1900, the immigrant came on his own and worked until he had saved enough for a trip back to China. During this first return to his village he might marry, or, if already married, he might arrange to bring back with him a teen-aged son or nephew. Through subsequent return trips accompanied by teen-aged relatives, fractional families without women were assembled abroad. (Wickberg et al. 1982, 5)

In contrast to the men attracted to migrant work during the Gold Rush, or as contract laborers on the railway, many of the workers in Chinese laundries arrived through chain migration (Wickberg et al. 1982, 5). While many of them self-identified as single, most were married and only lived as bachelors. Owing to cost, Chinese custom which was influenced by Confucianism and the local anti-Chinese violence, wives and other female family members were the last to come to Canada. In some cases, “married bachelors,” who worked outside of China but their spouses were left in their hometowns, could not wait for the coming of their families after 1947 when family reunion was open to these Chinese (e.g. Li 1998, Wickberg et al. 1982 and Marshall 2011a, 2014).

In Newfoundland, one of the most remarkable characteristics of Chinese immigration is that all Chinese immigrants came as chain migrants. Before Newfoundland’s Confederation to Canada in 1949, all Chinese were linked by kinship or region. An official document entitled “Registration of Persons of Chinese Race Admitted into The Colony of Newfoundland under the Provisions of The Chinese Immigration Act 6 EDW. VII CAP 2, June 4, 1910 to March 26,

1949,” shows that all registered Chinese immigrants were from the Province of Canton, China. Among these people, ninety percent out of 334 claimed Siyi counties 四邑 (mainly Hoi Ping and Toisan 台山), a small district in Southern Canton, as their birthplace. In 1975, in order to update background information of the Chinese in Newfoundland, the Chinese Student Society of Memorial University of Newfoundland conducted a survey with all Chinese residents in this province. Their findings suggest that more than one third of families (66/195) were from Hoi Ping and two thirds of families (135/195) came from the coastal part of Southern Canton province (mostly Hoi Ping County and Toisan County) (Hong et al. 1975, 10). Wallace Hong, one of the former share holders of the Kenmount Restaurant and the previous owner of Silver Bowl restaurant at the food court of Village Mall, recalls:

At that time, people got immigration forms in Newfoundland and brought them home to give to those people they would like to sponsor. Chinese people in Newfoundland were all related in the early days. You would never give applications to a new guy that you don't know. My older brother Sam came here in 1931, which was the same year as when William Ping and Gene Hong came. They actually boarded on the same boat. In 1938, another brother of mine came over and he died in a fire when he was working in a laundry. (Wallace Hong 2013)

Chinese workers were encouraged to travel to Newfoundland due to domestic political instability including two Opium Wars 鸦片战争 (1840-1842 and 1860-1861), Taiping Rebellion 太平天国运动 (1850-1864), First Sino-Japanese War 甲午战争 (1894-1895), Boxer Rebellion 义和团运动 (1898-1901), Second Sino-Japanese War 抗日战争 (1937-1945) and many other civil wars among different Chinese political and military powers as well as economic hardship in China. They hoped to take advantage of greater social stability and potential employment opportunities in this “Promised Land,” or “Gold Mountain” 金山 as described by Wallace Hong,

whose father came from Toisan to Newfoundland as a laundryman in 1919 (Wallace Hong 2013). As listed in the *International Chinese Business Directory of the World for the Year 1913*, there were eight Chinese hand laundries in St. John's (Wong 1913, 1385): Fong Lee Laundry, Jim Lee Laundry, John Lee Laundry, Hong Lee Laundry, Hop Wah Laundry, Kam Lung Laundry (41 Cochrane Street), Kam Lung laundry (Harbour Place) and Yee Lee Laundry (Wong 1913). According to William Ping, in St John's in the 1930s to 1940s there were twenty-odd Chinese laundries⁹ that employed more than two hundred Chinese workers. In addition to laundries, by the year of 1913, Chinese owned business also included general merchandise: Kim Lee and Lee Lee, Oriental Store featuring Chinese dry goods, silk merchant store Sam Hing, tea merchant store Wing Shing & Co. and Wing Sing selling Chinese and Japanese lacquers (Wong 1913, 1385).

These Chinese pioneers, most of whom were unmarried young men like Fong Choy, came to Newfoundland to pursue their fortune and build a better life. The journey from southern China to Newfoundland was a painful ordeal. According to William Ping, in late 1920s and early 1930s, Chinese people, especially Cantonese, had to go to Hong Kong by train or by boat to board a ship to North America. This ship would stop at Shanghai, Osaka, Yokahoma and finally Vancouver, Canada (Ping 1995a, 23-24). An immigrant who did not hold a permit to visit families and friends in Vancouver or other places in Canada, and whose destination was St. John's, had to continue their journey immediately after landing. Because Newfoundland was not a part of Canada during this period, "they were put under guard and escorted to a train in the

⁹ According to William Ping's memoir, these laundries included: Jin Lee laundry at Duckworth Street, Chay Lee Laundry at King's Road, Yueu Lee Laundry at Duckworth Street, Kam Lung Laundry at Cochrane Street, John Lee Laundry at Gower Street, Sran Laundry at Monkstown Road, Fong Lee Laundry at Prescott Street, Jom Lee Laundry at Theatre Hill, Jim Lee Laundry at Carter's Hill, Sing Lee Laundry at Cookstown Road, Yee Lee Laundry at New Gower Street, Jim Gig Laundry at New Gower Street, Kim Lee Laundry at New Gower Street, Hep Wah Laundry at Casey Street, Hing (or Hai, as David Fong said) Lee Laundry at Casey Street, Newfoundland Laundry at Present Street, Wing Hing Laundry at Hamilton Street, Wing Lee Laundry at Hutching Street and East End Laundry at Water Street.

same car and again guarded by policemen all the way to Montreal” (Hong et al. 1975; Yu 1986, 19). Yet, the escorted trip did not end in Montreal; Chinese who wanted to enter Newfoundland were “locked in a cabin to await a train to take them to Halifax or North Sydney and from there they travelled by boat and train to St. John’s” (Pitt 1980, 426; Yu 1986, 19; Marshall 2013). The entire journey to from China to Newfoundland took more than a month. In addition to the route recorded by Ping, Navy Au, who was born in Stephenville and raised in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, mentions another mode of travel which was also popularly adopted by Chinese immigrants. Au recalls, “My father came to America by boat in 1947. He landed in San Francisco and crossed the US by train to New York City. From there he travelled by boat to Newfoundland” (Navy Au 2014).

Chinese immigration to Newfoundland as well as other places in North America was sometimes described as the American Westward Expansion and those Chinese pioneers who undertook it were considered brave explorers like American cowboys. Kim Hong mentions that it was not until the early 1950s that travelling by plane became more popular in cross-Pacific Ocean trips and he was one of a few early Chinese who came to Newfoundland by plane (Kim Hong 2013). George Au, the current owner of the Sun Luck Restaurant in Stephenville, western Newfoundland, said that he might be the first one who flew from Hong Kong to Newfoundland in 1949 (George Au 2014). In Hoi Ping County and Toisan County, these young men were often seen as courageous heroes and there were many folksongs sung by young girls to express their love for these adventurous, brave men:

If you have a daughter, don’t marry her to a baker
Or she will not get half a year’s sleep out of three.

If you have a daughter, don’t marry her to a farmer
Or her legs will be covered in cow dung and her hair
Will be full of dust.

If you have a daughter, you should marry her to a Gold
Mountain guest.

Whenever his boat turns around,
She will have dollars by the husbands [sic].

A Toi-Shan folksong sung by Sau-Ping (Woon 1998, 14)

Unfortunately working as laundrymen or general labourers broke the dreams of many Chinese men who wanted to become rich “Gold Mountain” guests.

During the first decade of Chinese settlement in Newfoundland, immigrants were not considered a threat, confined as they were to the feminized occupation of laundrymen. In the minds of many local white male Newfoundlanders, Chinese men were not competitors in the local labour market; potentially they might take work away from women but given women’s under representation in the labour market during this time period, their jobs were generally considered domestic rather than public affairs. Therefore, in 1904, the draft of “The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons” against Chinese immigrants to Newfoundland was suspended. This suspended proposal was put forward during the 1904 session of the Newfoundland Legislature by W. R. Howley, the member for Bay St. George. He attempted to persuade the Newfoundland government to take action as other British or former British colonies like Canada, Australia, South Africa and the U.S.A. had to restrict Chinese laborers and to avoid existing and/or potential racist riots or other kinds of chaos (*Evening Telegram* April 16, 1904; Hong 1987, 1). However, a majority of members of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland rejected his suggestion and regarded it irrelevant to Newfoundland’s situation because of the small population of Chinese, their major occupation as laundry workers and their “quiet” and “peaceful” personality (*Evening Telegram*, April 20, 1904; Hong 1987, 3-4).

It was when Chinese men began to compete for jobs with white males that they became a “peril.” From late 1904 to 1906, local newspapers reported on Chinese employment in industries other than laundry business. For example, on May 17, 1906, *The Evening Telegram* reported that Chinese workers were hired by a Mr. Weeks in Bay Bulls (a community in eastern Newfoundland), on May 22, 1906, the *Evening Herald* reported that Chinese left St. John’s for Bell Island (a community adjacent to St. John’s) to work in the mine and on June 14, 1906, Chinese men were reported fishing (*Daily News*, June, 14, 1906). When Chinese residents crossed the border of “feminine work” to set foot on “masculine” territory, perhaps especially the traditionally masculine turf of the fishing industry, the local community felt threatened. For example, on June 16, 1906, the *Evening Herald* published a letter from a reader from Bay Bulls condemning Mr. Weeks not only for employing some Chinese residents to work for him, but for commenting that the Chinese were “better educated than the people of Bay Bulls” (*Evening Herald*, June 16, 1906). The reader felt insulted: “This we decidedly consider as uncomplimentary to us, and I would make bold to say that the people of Bay Bulls in intelligence and education are not behind any in the country similarly situated” (*Evening Herald*, June 16, 1906). The previously nonthreatening, “feminine” presence of Chinese in Newfoundland was being transformed into a horrible “Yellow Peril” (*Daily News*, November, 29, 1905; Mayer 2014; Thompson 1978; Wang 2006; Wu 1982). It seemed that the growing Chinese population and its modest social and economic successes soon exceeded the limits of toleration for some Newfoundlanders.

Tensions between Chinese immigrants and native Newfoundlanders intensified when the latter heard of the anti-West Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 (see Bicker and Tredemann 2007, Esherick 1987). During this uprising, priests and missionaries were killed and many Chinese who

converted to Christianity were persecuted. Images of the Chinese as non-Christian heathens circulated as did the rumor that the Chinese men would put local religion and culture at risk and take over the labor market in this British dominion. Anti-Chinese sentiment rapidly increased across the whole island, and the word “celestials” that once was used to refer to the Chinese in newspaper reports was replaced with the more insulting term “pigtails” in reference to the hair style of Chinese during the last imperial dynasty of China (*Evening Herald*, June 10, 1900). In the documentary film, *The Last Chinese Laundry*, Au Kim Lee’s son Hoi Lun (Hiland) recounted the negative reception that greeted his father when he arrived in the province: “when my father first disembarked on the harbor of Port aux Basques, some locals seized his long braid, which was the typical Chinese image at that time. Those people dragged my father a couple of feet and made him very hurt and embarrassed. When he arrived in St. John’s, the first thing he did was to cut his ugly and stupid braid with great anger” (*The Last Chinese Laundry* 1987).

A locally-owned steam laundry, the “Globe Steam Laundry,” was opened to compete with the Chinese hand-washing laundries. The laundry business became a battlefield between Chinese and White Newfoundlanders. The working and living conditions of Chinese-owned establishments were frequently reported with bias as unclean, unhealthy and over-crowded by local health inspectors and these reports were published in local newspapers. Thus, some local Chinese laundry owners such as Au Kim Lee had to defend their reputation (*Evening Herald* Jan 22, 1906; *Evening Herald* Feb 12, 1906; *Evening Herald* Feb 13, 1906; *Evening Herald* Feb 15, 1906; *Daily News* March 3, 1906; Hong 1987; Li 2010 and Sparrow 2006).

When Globe Steam Laundry was destroyed by fire on August 2, 1905, the arrival of the seven Chinese in St. John’s in the same month was thought to be associated with the incident. *The Daily News* reported: “When the Globe Steam Laundry was destroyed by fire the city

Chinamen telegraphed for their friends, and the arrival of seven is the result” (*Daily News*, August 23, 1905). *The Evening Telegram*, siding with *The Daily News*, also reported the arrival of the Chinese as being the consequence of the recently destroyed local laundry. In addition, it went further to lobby the government to terminate Chinese immigration: “Since the burning of the Globe Steam Laundry, Chinamen have been flocking in here and are still coming ... We are in cordial agreement with the *News*, as to the desirability of putting an end to the immigration of Chinese” (*Evening Telegram* August 23, 1905). With rumors circulating about the arrival of more Chinese (*Evening Herald* February 15, 1906; *Evening Herald* 1 March 1906; *Evening Herald* May 1, 1906; *Evening Telegram* May 1, 1906; *Daily News* May 3, 1906; *Evening Telegram* August 4, 1906), “clearly, it was time for the government to take some action on this very serious problem” (Hong 1987, 16).

Within this climate of mistrust, one incident resulted in the implementation of a stricter immigration law for Chinese immigrants: Wah Lung’s application for Newfoundland citizenship in order to get a passport to freely return to China through Canada (Chang 1978, 7). Wah Lung had been in Newfoundland for more than five years and, according to Newfoundland’s immigration law, was eligible to be naturalized, but his application was rejected. In April 1906, the issue of restricting Chinese immigration was therefore again brought to the House of Assembly for discussion, and without heated debate, “The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons” was passed (*Evening Telegram* April 21, 1906; *Evening Herald* April 26, 1906; May 1, 1906; Hong 1987; Li 2010 and Sparrow 2006).

The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons

“The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons” of Newfoundland (6 EDW. VII CAP. 2) in 1906 was very similar to the 1903 Canadian Chinese immigration law (S.C. 1903 c.8

S.6). The major difference between the two is that the Newfoundland version required a head tax of \$300, which was \$500 in Canadian law (*Evening Telegram* April 21, 1906; Hong 1987; Li 2010 and Sparrow 2006). The Newfoundland version also placed a limit of one Chinese passenger per every fifty tons weight per ship. According to this Act, every Chinese person, except members of the Diplomatic Corps, clergymen, tourists and some other favored categories, had to pay the tax to get entry into Newfoundland (*Evening Telegram* April 21, 1906; Hong 1987; Li 2010 and Sparrow 2006). However, students could have their tax refunded if they studied in Newfoundland for three years (Hong et al. 1975, 16). The purpose of the head tax, as the statement of the Legislative Council indicated, was to discourage an “inferior class” of Chinese immigrants from entering the colony, instead of ruling out all Chinese immigrants (*Evening Telegram* April 21, 1906). However, during the restriction years, especially the years before the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War, visits of those favored Chinese classes such as diplomats, merchants, missionaries, scholars and professionals to Newfoundland were very few. The Chinese immigration to Newfoundland before 1967, when Canada adopted a new immigration policy, falls into the pattern of “the way of the bachelor” termed by Alison Marshall (Marshall 2011a). According to Marshall, typically, Chinese who came to North America, lived as sojourners, earning money and sending it back to support families in China and intended to return to their hometowns eventually (Marshall 2011a).

This Act came into force on August 8, 1906. Prior to the enactment of the bill, on May 1st 1906, more than fifty Chinese immigrants arrived in Newfoundland. “On their arrival in Port aux Basques there was nothing the local Customs official could do but look at them sadly and think of the over \$16,000 worth of head taxes that he was missing” (Walsh [Chang] 1978, 8).

Not all Chinese were as lucky as these fifty-seven newcomers. On November 27, 1906, *The Daily News* reported on the situation of one unfortunate Chinese immigrant after the enactment of the Chinese Immigration Act in both Canada and Newfoundland under the title of

“Chinaman’s Sad Predicament: Boarded Bruce but not Allowed to Land at Either End of Route”:

North Sydney, Nov. 21 – On board the steamer, Bruce, last week, was a passenger who made several trips each way between Port aux Basques and North Sydney, very much against his will. The passenger was a Chinaman, who boarded the steamer at Port aux Basques, but who, on his arrival here, was refused permission to land by the customs authorities, as he lacked the necessary \$500 to deposit as security that he would proceed to his destination in the United States. An effort was made by several of his countrymen here to obtain the money, but without result, so there was nothing left for the almond-eyed one to do but return to Newfoundland. On his return to Port aux Basques, however, a new difficulty presented itself, the trouble this time being the three hundred dollar head tax law, recently enacted by the Colonial Government. The fact that the Chinaman came from Newfoundland made no difference to the authorities at Port aux Basques, and he was not allowed to leave the Bruce until the three hundred dollars was put up. As the celestial did not have the money, and could not raise it, he had to remain on board, and was an unwilling passenger back to North Sydney. His sad predicament was again the cause of much concern to his fellow-countrymen here, and telegrams were at once sent to friends in the United States for assistance, the appeal failed to elicit a response, however, before the Bruce was due to sail again, and once more the Chinaman had to make the trip across the stormy gulf. After the departure of the boat, one of the local Chinamen, who was asked what was to become of the traveler, replied: “No landee in Canada, no landee in Newfoundland, thlow’ee overboard.” Such a sad fate, however, was not to be John’s [sic], for the necessary three hundred was deposited with the authorities at Port aux Basques by friends whose sympathy had been enlisted, and the erstwhile sailor was free to again delve among the soap suds. (*Daily News*, November 27, 1906)

The enactment of “The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons” was “in place prohibiting miscegenation and the immigration of Chinese laborers’ wives” (Cheung 2002, 262), because poor Chinese laborers could not afford to pay for trips back to China, let alone pay for their wives’ or other female relatives’ trips to this new country on top of the heavy head tax for entry. Therefore, the absence of Chinese women in Newfoundland till 1950 meant the Chinese community was an “all male” community. During the fifty-odd years between the first arrival of Chinese to Newfoundland in 1895 and Confederation with Canada in 1949, there was only one

Chinese woman who lived in the colony. Mrs Au came here in 1927 as the wife of Au Kim Lee, who had been in St. John's for twenty-eight years and was a naturalized citizen.¹⁰ For those Chinese who were not naturalized, many suffered extreme loneliness and isolation in their new home.

Although there was no specific restriction on the immigration of Chinese women, as mentioned above, they were "subjected to racial discrimination, including the imposition of a head tax" and limited by restrictions in the labour market as well as the high cost for the journey (Li 1998, 64; Wickberg et. al. 1982). Other factors played an important role in maintaining the gender imbalance throughout Canada and Newfoundland. Li writes, "Aside from the financial costs, there were social costs that tended to discourage the Chinese from bringing their families. Hostilities and discrimination often led to abuses and attacks. Chinese quarters and enclaves were frequently targets of racial harassment, as in the anti-oriental riots of 1887 and 1907 in Vancouver" (Li 1998, 64).

Although there were no large-scale racial riots in Newfoundland, the lives of many local Chinese were not peaceful or harmonious. For example, on 24 February 1906, the *Evening Herald* reported that Chinese were attacked by local youth:

People living on Gower St. between Victoria and Prescott Streets, witnessed a most disgraceful scene there yesterday afternoon, when a crowd of half-grown youths attacked two defenceless Chinamen, pelting them unmercifully with snow-balls and otherwise ill-using them. The poor "chinks" had not the least chance against their cowardly assailants, who followed them to Fong Lee's laundry on Prescott St., viciously pelting them all the way. This gang of lads cause great annoyance to the residents of the locality and something should be done, and that quickly, to bring them to their senses. They are the sons of respectable parents and are quite capable of knowing right from wrong. If the Chinese are allowed to come in and settle here, they should certainly be given that protection which all peaceable citizens are entitled to,

¹⁰ However, according to the *Evening Herald*, there might be a Chinese woman who lived in St. John's prior to the arrival of Mrs. Au. On 25 January 1906, *Evening Herald* reported that a letter with an address to Mrs. Yee Lee could be considered as an indication of the existence of a Chinese woman (if not more) in the city.

and the city's good name should not be jeopardised by the acts of a few thoughtless and vicious lads. (For other examples, see: *Evening Telegram* May 18, 1904; July 26, 1904; July 16, 1904; August 19, 1904; December 11, 1904; December 21, 1904; February 14, 1905; August 2, 1905; August 23, 1905; January 22, 1906; January 27, 1906; January 29, 1906. See also related reports in *Daily News* and *Evening Harold*)

However, the head tax and sporadic racial conflicts did not stop Chinese immigration to Newfoundland because their locally tough life was still better than what they would have suffered in China where life was filled with chaos due to political instability, international and domestic wars and regular natural disasters. By working at laundries in Newfoundland, most of these Chinese were able to save enough money to send home to support their families. Some of them could also afford to return to China regularly and to get married and purchase properties in their hometowns. Kim Hong notes, "At that time, we saw that a lot of people who came to North America did well. They sent money back to their families for lands and to build houses. Actually nobody forced you to come. After my father passed away in 1945, my mother and I were still supported by my grandfather who was in Newfoundland. My mother thus didn't really have to work to raise the family" (Kim Hong 2013). Billy Hong, the previous owner of Hong's Takeout on Torbay Road in St. John's, recalls that, "My father used to work in Canada as a general labourer and I believed that he had been working as a laundryman or in any other occupations that Chinese would do in those days. I could imagine how difficult his life was in Canada. But he came home with a lot of money in 1947 so that we were able to buy lands and houses and live just like those upper class people" (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013). Wallace Hong also remembers how the money sent back by his father and brothers from Newfoundland changed the life of his family in China, "as kids, every year we had new clothes for the Chinese New Year, but many other families at the time could not afford that kind of expense" (Wallace Hong 2013).

Family Reunion after Confederation: The Second Immigration Wave

After World War II, Canada joined the United Nations which advocated human rights and racial equality against discrimination in any form. In 1947, “An Act Respecting Citizenship, Naturalization and the Statutes of Aliens” (S.C. 1946, c. 15) was passed and the institutional restriction of Chinese immigration was abolished at the same time. When Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, this act was immediately applied to the youngest province. According to the New Canadian Citizenship Act, wives and children under twenty-one of Chinese with Canadian citizenship “were eligible for sponsorship to enter Canada” (Yu 1986, 22). In addition to some Chinese who chose to return to China,¹¹ most Chinese residents in Newfoundland were willing to bring their wives and children to Newfoundland, but they had to “first make application to the Federal Department of Immigration” (*Daily News* March 18, 1950). Therefore, “in the case of Chinese who are domiciled here but who have not taken out citizenships papers, application, for having their wives and families here will be accepted when they have filed applications of ‘intention’ to become citizens. The St. John’s Department has received several applications from local Chinese who have asked permission to bring their families here, but up to this date, no Chinese women have arrived in the city” (*Daily News* March 18, 1950). A 6" × 8" picture of ten Chinese men with nice suits and pleased facial expressions was released by *Observer’s Weekly* in February 1950 indicating that these residents of St. John’s had taken the Oath of Allegiance at the Supreme Court and had become full-fledged Canadian citizens (*Observer’s Weekly* February, 1950; Yu 1986, 23). Wallace Hong says, “One day in 1949, when I got home from outside, I saw my brother Sam who just came back from Newfoundland. He gave me a stack of papers full of

¹¹ For example, a newspaper report from 1948 read, “Some 20 Chinese residents of Newfoundland have within the most recent months left for their homeland, China via San Francisco, a reliable informant stated yesterday. There was, prior to the war a steady flow of Chinese to their native land at regular intervals. Coming here as restaurant keepers, laundrymen, they nonetheless wanted to go off on regular vacations to their homeland. Then, the World War came, completly[sic] negatizing passages to China. Now, with the peace, many Chinese who had industriously saved for years are taking advantage of this opportunity to go to China.” (*Daily News*, April 28, 1948)

English words that I didn't understand and told me that I was able to go to Newfoundland without paying a head tax. As a 15-year-old kid, I had no idea what my brother was talking about, but from his delighted face, I guessed that it must be something good" (Wallace Hong 2013).

At the time, there was a Chinese woman living in Gander around 1949, but she had lived in mainland Canada before she and her husband had relocated to Newfoundland (*Daily News* March 18, 1950). In late 1950, the first three Chinese women to come directly from China to Newfoundland arrived. Mrs. Au [Oue]¹² settled in Corner Brook, Mrs. Holn Suey in St. John's and Mrs. Lee Pon, with two children, on Bell Island (Pitt 1981, 426). George Au recalls that, "Other than Mrs. Oue and others, Hayford Fong's wife was also one of the earliest Chinese women who came to Newfoundland right after Confederation. I remember this because, unlike Canadian women who carried their babies in front of them, on the day when Mrs. Fong arrived, she carried her child on the back. It looked a little bit strange" (George Au 2014).

Wallace Hong recounts that, after his father came to Newfoundland in 1919, he only went back to China once in 1932 for several months before he retired and permanently returned to Hong Kong in 1956 (Wallace Hong 2013). Therefore, during his parents' 49-year marriage beginning in 1910, they only spent one fifth of the time together (Wallace Hong 2013). Long separation between Chinese in Newfoundland and their spouses was not uncommon in the restriction years. The following story of Wong Kim Sue Jim and her family tells of a hard-earned reunion:

A Sad Recollection

Wong Kim Sue Jim was humbled to be part of the Ottawa ceremony,¹³ having made the trip with her son and grandson, but she only wishes there was never a reason

¹² Fung Oue is the wife of the deceased owner of the Seven Seas restaurant in Corner Brook.

¹³ She was attending the ceremony in remembrance of Canadian Chinese Head tax in 2006. In this ceremony, Canadian Prime Minister, Honorable Stephen Harper, on behalf of Canadian Federal Government, made a speech to apologize for the discriminatory head tax on Chinese since 1903.

for the apology. She married her husband Fong in 1943. They had three children and when he immigrated to Newfoundland, she was left behind to tend to the children and a household, hoping one day to join him in a better land. Soon after arriving in Newfoundland, Confederation took place and the head tax and the ban against Chinese women being allowed into the country was lifted. He was quick to inform his wife and let her know that as soon as finances were in place for immigration, he would send for them. More than six years later, his wife made the two-month trip to Canada, by boat, train and airplane. The years apart from each other were difficult. Mrs. Jim worked long hours to provide for the family, working in the rice and vegetable fields, and often carrying baskets of dried fish weighing more than 50 pounds distances longer than five kilometers. Work hours were much the same as in Newfoundland, she said, but the labor was much harder. Through it all, having her family apart was hard, and communication with her husband was difficult, receiving only one or two letters a year. His father found living apart equally as hard, Mr. Jim said, as he lived with the fear of communists taking over Hong Kong and not knowing what was happening day-by-day to his wife and family. Communists were persecuting landowners, and his family owned land. When the family finally met in Newfoundland, it was still tough, as they had been separated for so long, adjusting was taking some time. Although she had King and Jim with her when she arrived, her daughter Betty had to stay behind, as there was a fear of tuberculosis. She stayed behind with her grandmother for three years while they were taking the necessary precautions for immigration.

“We had to have x-rays done in Hong Kong and send them to Canada so they could see there were no problems. When they saw things were okay, our grandmother took Betty and they both immigrated to Newfoundland,” said Pat, while translating for his mother who still talks to her family in their native language. Mrs. Jim said she was so happy when her daughter Betty arrived and the family was able to be together again. The Jim family had four more children while living in Stephenville. They moved to Baie Verte to open Jim's Restaurant in 1966. They later purchased three other sections of the building, and operated a convenience store, which his mother still operates today. As she prepares to celebrate her 84th birthday this year, she still leads an active life. She loves to tend to her own garden after getting up at five each morning, before starting her day in the store at nine. She's grateful for her life in Canada, which allowed her to offer her children so much more, she said. “There was more here for the children, socially, educationally, and job opportunities were much better.”

----- *The Nor'wester* (Springdale, NL, July 5, 2006)

However, not everyone was as lucky as Wong Kim Sue Jim whose husband was still waiting for her to join him after long-term separation. Because of extreme loneliness over the

years, especially when World War II cut off the connection between China and Newfoundland,¹⁴ a lot of married men felt so unconfident and hopeless to reunite with their families that some of them remarried local Newfoundland girls, most of who were working in restaurants operated by Chinese owners. After the war and Newfoundland's Confederation to Canada, some of these remarried men reconnected to their Chinese families, but a majority of them chose not to leave their Newfoundland families and return to their Chinese wives; whereas, they still felt responsible to support their previous families, who would still constantly get financial assistance. Charlie Snook, who is a retired owner of a local mechanical supplies and service store, recalls, "I used to work at Scotia Bank. I got to know more Chinese at the bank because there were a lot of Chinese who came to the bank and bought those money drafts of fifty Hong Kong dollars and sent them over to their families in China or Hong Kong. Some people told me, 'I have been here for so many years and married a Canadian woman. But I also had a family in China, so I have to support two families.' Fifty Hong Kong dollars at that time was a lot of money to Chinese in their home countries. Some of these men sent once a month" (Charlie Snook 2014). May Soo tells a similar story regarding her grandfather, Harry Chow:

My Grandfather came to Newfoundland before Confederation and opened the Globe Cafe in Windsor [a town in central Newfoundland]. His small business made enough money that he could send money back home to my grandmother in China. He hired local women to work in his restaurant and ended up having a relationship with one of them. The union produced 15 children and lasted up until his death. When the men were able to sponsor their Chinese wives over from China, my grandfather chose not to take that route. My grandmother eventually came to Canada as a "paper wife," which is to say, she bought immigration papers belonging to another person's wife. My grandfather remained with his Newfoundland wife, although my grandmother had arrived from China in 1959. My grandmother [see Figure 1] lived with us until her death in 2000. She was very bitter that her husband was taken away by a white woman. She had a dislike for all white women. She looked upon them with disdain as home wreckers. Because he had 15 children with her, she saw all white women as lustful and promiscuous. I remember one afternoon, I drove my grandmother to Woolco. I saw my

¹⁴ Regarding the impact of World War II on the life of Chinese immigrants in Canada, see e.g. Li 1998, Marshall 2011 and Wickberg 1982.

step-grandmother from a distance. I whispered in my grandmother's ear, "That's HER." She glared with hatred to see what she looked like from the corner of her eye. They have never met face to face, even though they lived in the same town. (May Soo 2013)



Figure 1 (Left to right): Ah Wan (Yvonne) Tse (May Soo's Mother), Hong Szeto (May Soo's paternal grandmother) and Tom Yet Foo (known as Tom Chow, May Soo's father). This photo was taken in China before Soo's parents' departure to Newfoundland in 1956. Courtesy of May Soo.

In many cases, family members were separated in different countries, say, one in China and one in Canada, and reunited in Canada. But the story of Lihua Xiao and Pengfei Liu, a senior researcher of the National Research Council, is slightly different from those of others. Lihua Xiao, the owner of the East End Tailoring, says, "My husband and I had been separated for 6 years in China. He was working in Beijing and I was working in my hometown in Shandong Province [in northern part of China]. Each year, we could only have two months holiday living

together. When my husband came to Canada to study in 1988, I also got my visa to Canada and came a year later. I was so glad that our family were reunited in Canada. If we were still in China, we should have suffered longer separation” (Lihua Xiao 2013). Regarding this, Pengfei Liu says, “An important reason that drove us to come abroad was the possibility of family reunion” (Pengfei Liu 2013).

In some cases, family reunion in Canada was the direct result of the political change in mainland China from the nationalist rule to the communist rule. There was fear of fallout in North America resulting from China’s political change to communism. Chinese immigrants worried that Chinese immigration to North America might be restricted because of the Cold War mentality. This prompted local Chinese families to apply for Canadian citizenship in order to bring family members to Newfoundland from China under the family reunification program. Kim Hong, who was sponsored by his grandfather to come to Newfoundland in May 1950 when he was 13-year-old, says, “I came to Canada because at that time, the communists took over the country and a lot of people wanted to get out of the country. If the government had not changed, I should have still lived in China, got education, found a job and raised family there. When everybody wanted to come out, I happened to have my grandfather in Newfoundland who could sponsor and look after me because he had an established business here. More importantly, I would like to come over” (Kim Hong 2013).

As a result of family reunions, a generation of Chinese children were born in Newfoundland. The *Evening Telegram* told the story of the first Chinese baby with both Chinese parents born in Gander as follows: “the first baby of Chinese parents to be born in Nfld [sic], arrived on the scene here Saturday. The baby’s father, Roy Lee, a meteorologist with the Dept. of Transport, moved there with his Chinese wife from Toronto several months ago” (*Evening Telegram*, Feb

27, 1950). The mother of this baby was possibly the first Chinese woman to reside in Newfoundland before Confederation as mentioned earlier. From 1950 to the early 1960s, Newfoundland's Chinese population, especially in and around St. John's area was booming due to the family reunions and newly-born children. For instance, in a chat with David Fong, an engineer and one of the share holders of the Quidi Vidi Brewery, he told me that he was said to be one of the early Chinese baby to both Chinese parents born in Newfoundland (David Fong 2011). In 1951, Fong was born to a local Chinese man, Hayford Fong, and his long-separated wife Oio-Hi Fong. In the first two decades after Newfoundland's Confederation to Canada, the local Chinese community transformed "from sojourning to citizenship" (Sparrow 2006).

In the post-Confederation period, the Chinese continued coming to Newfoundland through the channels and mutual assistance networks of chain immigration. Like their predecessors, many Chinese were introduced by their immediate/non-immediate relatives, countrymen or other acquaintances who were mostly owners of established Chinese businesses (a majority of them were restaurants), which were/are constantly seeking trustworthy and qualified workers. For example, Chan Chau Tam, the previous owner and chef of the China House Restaurant at the Torbay Road Mall in St. John's, says, "In early 1970s, my uncle, my aunt's husband (who was a Au), had two restaurants in St. John's so that he needed some people to work for him. He first asked one of my younger brothers who just graduated from high school in Hong Kong. My brother agreed to come here to work in the kitchen. After my brother's arrival, my brother told me that the restaurants were still seeking for more helps and, on behalf of my uncle, he asked if I wanted to come. At the time, I was doing some small business in Hong Kong but it was not very good. Therefore, after I discussed with my parents and my wife, we decided to come over" (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Similar to the experience of Chan Chau Tam, Francis Tam, a food and

beverage coordinator at the Marriott Hotel on Kenmount Road, recalls how his family settled down in Newfoundland in 1970s: “Grand Falls was my grandfather’s first stop in Canada from Canton. He was sponsored by another Chinese named Tom Chow [May Soo’s father, who was a Tam], who actually sponsored a lot of Chinese to come over in his life time.¹⁵ Tom had a business [Taiwan Restaurant in Grand Falls] (see Figure 2) and he needed workers, who he knew and trusted” (Francis Tam 2013). In recent years, Chinese restaurants still heavily rely on this traditional way to recruit workers. Joseph Mo (Bingzhang Mo in Chinese), one of the current chefs at the Magic Wok Eatery, first came to Newfoundland to work at Paul Chong’s Restaurant Dragon 88 in Conception Bay South, a town in the St. John’s metropolitan area. Mo’s boss in China went to the same culinary training school as Paul and the former introduced Mo to the latter (Joseph Mo 2013).



Figure 2: Taiwan Restaurant in Grand Falls-Windsor, 2014.

¹⁵ In addition to Francis Tam’s grandfather and father (Tommy Tam), many chefs in Newfoundland including Allen Lau, Paul Chong, Jimmy Tam, Bing Sun Chi and Jackie Tan, etc.

In addition to chain immigration, the family reunion program is also another important current channel through which Chinese immigrate to Newfoundland. Usually, when Chinese people attain their Canadian permanent residency and/or citizenship, they would begin to process immigration applications for their families. After a certain amount of time, spouses, children or even parents would be able to reunite with them in Newfoundland. Wendy Long, wife of John Shieh, who is a professor of the Department of Computer Science at Memorial University, says, “He [John Shieh] came to Canada in 1981 and I came three years later. During 1981 to 1984, he had not been back to China. I remember that, one day, my daughter met some of her friends at the playground in China, and they began to talk about their fathers’ occupation. At that time, my daughter had no idea what her father was doing because I rarely mentioned his situation in Canada to her. My daughter told her friends that, ‘my father is a grocery retailer’” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012). Because of the separation between him and his daughter, Shieh says, “At the beginning of our family reunion in Canada, my daughter looked at me as a stranger and I also felt it was hard to communicate with her. I think that was because I haven’t talked to her for more than three years. Fortunately, it got better afterwards” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012).

However, in the post-confederation era, especially after the adaptation of the new Canadian immigration law, chain immigration and family reunion contributed much less to the growth of Chinese population in Newfoundland than other types of immigration.

The Coming of Professionals: A New Wave of Chinese Immigration

Family reunification changed the demographics of the Chinese population in Newfoundland, transforming it from a bachelor society to a gender balanced community. Unfortunately its impact on the socio-economic status of Chinese residents was less significant. When the wives

and children of local Chinese arrived in St. John's, their employment options were still limited to ethnicized businesses like laundries or restaurants and there was not much social space available for them to interact with the general public in Newfoundland. For instance, Kim Hong still remembers what his mother told him before his departure for Canada in 1950, "Son, it is time to go to Canada and help your grandfather with the laundry work" (Kim Hong 2009). Therefore, like many of his peers, Kim Hong helped out at his family's business, the John Lee Laundry, when he was not attending school at night and in the summer time. Wallace Hong also mentions that his wife started to work in the family business two days after her landing in Newfoundland (Wallace Hong 2013). A more recent example is the experience of a 24-year-old Chinese woman named Christine Ho. In early 2013, she married a 28-year-old Chinese chef [Cody Li] working at Helen's in Badger, a town adjacent to Grand Falls-Windsor in central Newfoundland. In July 2013, she relocated from China to live with her husband and became a waitress in the restaurant (Christine Ho 2013). In many cases, most of these newly-arrived family members, like their spouses or relatives, were from the same region, for instance, the coastal part of Canton province. They spoke the same language and had similar educational and cultural backgrounds. These newcomers did not make the existing Chinese community in Newfoundland more diverse. Rather, on the contrary, they contributed to its homogeneity.

However, during the peak of family reunion, there were a few exceptions and Roy Lee was one of them. Roy Lee, the father of the first locally born Chinese baby with both Chinese parents, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was a meteorologist working with the Department of Transport (*Evening Telegram* February 27, 1950). Roy Lee was the first recorded Chinese professional who moved to Newfoundland after Confederation. The first Chinese family physician was Cosmas V. Ho, the present well-known founder of the Newfoundland-based Terra

Nova Fisheries Company Ltd., who was originally from Macau and came to Newfoundland in 1962. In a breakfast with Cosmas Ho and Kim Hong, Ho told me, “I was trained at the Taiwan Defence Medical Center and I happened to know, but I could not remember who told me this, that hospitals in Newfoundland were willing to accept foreign medical graduates to fill intern positions. So I came to Newfoundland and eventually stayed here” (Cosmas Ho 2009). After he settled down in Newfoundland, some of his alumni, such as E. T. Tjan, a Chinese otorhinolaryngologist [ENT doctor] originally from a Chinese community in Indonesia, also followed his path to this province to take up medical practice because of the career opportunity in 1966. Tjan says, “I came to Newfoundland because the General Hospital of St. John’s was the first one in Canada giving me the offer after I sent out several applications” (E. T. Tjan 2012). These medical practitioners were warmly welcomed professionals at a time “when Newfoundland urgently needed physicians to improve its health care” (Yu 1986, 23).

In 1966, the Canadian government issued the White Paper on Immigration, in which the non-discriminatory *Universal Point System* was outlined. This new system allowed Canada to choose economic immigrants through selection criteria with specific point requirements and it was to be applied to select immigrants in the next calendar year, 1967 (Canada, Manpower and Immigration 1966). Soon Chinese immigrants, who were highly educated and proficient in English, began to come to Newfoundland from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian countries. This group of Chinese, mostly medical specialists, “established a good reputation and an excellent relationship with the Newfoundlanders” (Yu 1986, 23).

Career opportunity is one of the most important factors driving Chinese from all over the world to come to and stay in Newfoundland although they might have many complaints about local weather and living conditions. When I asked him what his first impression of

Newfoundland was, E.T. Tjan said, “When I landed at the airport, I almost ran to the counter of Air Canada to buy an immediate return flight home” (E.T. Tjan 2012). Professor and Pharmacist

Lili Wang’s story speaks of the reasons for the continuous arrivals of Chinese professionals:

My husband and I graduated from the School of Pharmacy at the University of Alberta. After our graduation, both of us were looking for academic jobs, but it was very difficult for both of us to get in the same institution because there were only 9 universities in Canada having Pharmacy schools and two of them were located in Quebec. My husband was offered an interview at Memorial in 1993 when he was doing his postdoc at the University of Michigan. The interview went well and he was offered the job. After negotiating with Memorial, he decided to take this offer because we were told that it was very possible for me to get a position too. The Pharmacy school of Memorial was the youngest one in Canada so that they had more vacancies. I first came to Newfoundland in the late 1994 and the purpose of the trip was to get a general sense of the place, where my husband had already been working in since February 1994. I was very disappointed when I first arrived here. When we were students in Edmonton, the winter there was quite cold. So we preferred residing in a place with warmer climate. Newfoundland seemed to have a higher temperature, but it was so windy and sometimes it had terrible snow storms. The weather was so annoying to us. Fortunately, I was first offered a three-year contract, which became a tenure track position afterwards. So for the sake of all benefits, the weather is more tolerable now. (Lili Wang 2012)

The new immigration law actually opened a door for some post-1967 comers to Newfoundland, who intended to pursue a fair and safe living and working environment. Chin Tan, a Malaysian Chinese family doctor whose clinic is located in the Freshwater Road Medical Center in St. John’s, says, “I went to Dublin to attend medical school in 1962. After my graduation in 1968, I went back to Malaysia to practice. In 1969, we had a big racial riot there. This incident made me decide to leave the country. Initially I planned to go to Australia, England or Ireland. After working in London, England, for a few years, I decided to immigrate to North America. I chose Canada because I felt that Canada was a safer country with less violence. I came to Newfoundland because I was offered a job here” (Chin Tan 2012).

In addition to occupational opportunities, Canadian educational resources also attract many Chinese students who choose Newfoundland as their academic destination. For some,

Newfoundland also becomes the place where they stay permanently after their graduation. In the mid-1960s, Memorial University of Newfoundland began to recruit foreign students who intended to pursue higher education in Canada, especially students from Commonwealth countries or regions. Some currently active members of the Chinese community in Newfoundland, like Daniel Wong, Betty Wong and Arthur Leung, were all sent here from Hong Kong as students by their parents who wanted a promising future for their children. Daniel Wong, the current Project Director (China) of College of North Atlantic (Ridge Road Campus), recounts,

In the 60s, there were not many universities in Hong Kong so that not everyone was accepted to get in. Therefore, a lot of families had to turn to universities overseas. Because Hong Kong was under the British rule, it was more convenient for us to apply to universities in Commonwealth countries. More importantly, it was more likely to get scholarships. After submitting several applications, Memorial gave me the first offer so I took it. In 1968, with other 40 Hong Kong students, I became a student of Memorial. At the time, many Chinese undergraduate students were from Hong Kong. [Chinese] graduate students were mainly from Taiwan and many of them enrolled in various programs of Marine Institute, what was called Fishery College then. (Daniel Wong 2013)

Shinn Jia Hwang, a retired senior researcher of Ocean Science Center, was one of those Chinese graduate students who were originally from Taiwan. His academic interest in fisheries led him to pursue his doctoral education in Newfoundland in 1968. However, as many other international graduate students who had been married at the time, he did not plan to stay permanently after graduation. His immigration story indicates how open Newfoundland was to skilled professionals in 1970s. He recalls:

When I started my doctoral study at Memorial, I had my wife and two kids in Taiwan. Thus I was planning to go back to Taiwan after graduation. I had never thought of immigration at the time. My immigration story was so funny. I remember when I was trying to get my study permit extended, the immigration officer asked me: "Why don't you get your immigration paper?" I was surprised and asked if I could immigrate even if I was a student. He nodded. When he found out that I had a wife, he also got her immigration done. That was how I became a Canadian citizen. To be honest, if I went back to Taiwan, I could get a really good job and my family would settle well too. One of the reasons driving me to stay was the future of my kids. In Taiwan, a lot of parents

wanted to send their children abroad to get better education in the 1970s and 1980s. I thought I might do the same thing so I agreed to stay in Newfoundland so that my children would not have to experience the unnecessary cultural transition. (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012)

The current president of Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Tzu-Hao Hsu, a Taiwanese immigrant, whose family came in 1994, says, “I absolutely knew nothing about Newfoundland before I came. We had family connection here and we came here for the Canadian education” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012).

Other than students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and some Southeast Asian countries, a former president of Chinese Student Society Simon Tam mentions, “in the late 1970s, people from mainland China started to come to Newfoundland to study. Most of them were graduate students and visiting professors” (Simon Tam 2012). Among these early students from Mainland China, Pengfei Liu is one of those who stayed in Newfoundland after graduation. In a luncheon organized by the Education Office of People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) Embassy for Canada, Liu mentioned to me a novel entitled *Bai Xue Hong Chen* (*White Snow and Red Dirt* 白雪红尘), published in China in 1998, which was written by Zhen Yan, a student who came to Memorial University to study Sociology in 1988. Liu said, “Yan’s book is based on the real life of early PRC students. I actually know almost all the characters in the book personally in reality, but I am afraid that I cannot tell you who they are for the sake of privacy” (Pengfei Liu 2011).

At the turn of 21st century, rich and advanced educational resources in North America are still a major attraction to many Chinese students and their parents. Like other Canadian universities, Memorial University of Newfoundland has also started to build cooperative relationships with various Chinese universities such as Shanghai University 上海大学 and Renmin University 中国人民大学, and promote its academic excellence to potential Chinese

students. Stephen Feng (his Chinese name is Jianhui Feng), an IT specialist, was one of those students that Memorial recruited from China. Feng recalls:

When I was a student of Shenzhen University 深圳大学 (which is located in Shenzhen, a city in the southern part of China next to Hong Kong), I planned to go abroad to get further education because I wanted to open my eyes and get more experience. I thought that the experience of overseas study would make me more competitive in the labor market. I chose Memorial because, in 2006, I happened to know that there was a promotion fair of Canadian education. Due to my working schedule, I was only able to attend the introductory session of Memorial University. The lecture was coincidentally about the computer engineering program, which I was really interested. After the lecture, I had a conversation with the professor, who gave me a lot of warm and instructive responses. Then I decided to come. (Stephen Feng 2012)

Similar to other Canadian universities, advanced learning/teaching facilities are also furnished in Memorial. Moreover, unlike other Canadian universities located in communities with a large Chinese population where Chinese students may not be able to practice their English, the English-speaking environment makes the Newfoundland-located Memorial University more attractive to potential students and their parents. Feng continues:

One of the reasons why I came to Canada was that I had a relative living in Vancouver, Canada. But I didn't go there because I wanted to go to a place with a relatively smaller Chinese population. I found that many Chinese students studying in bigger cities with large co-ethnic people didn't progress in either language learning or development of social skills. They didn't even get a chance to taste local culture. I chose Newfoundland and Memorial because I wanted to improve my language proficiency and have more opportunities to learn local culture and communicate with local people. (Stephen Feng 2012)

In addition to factors such as family reunion, occupation and education, the natural beauty and slow-paced lifestyle of Newfoundland also entice Chinese newcomers to stay and raise families. Private musical instructor Katherine Huang, a native Taiwanese, who came to Newfoundland in 1974 with her newly-graduated husband, explains, "My husband was studying in Philadelphia. When he got his PhD, he started to look for a job. Although he learned electronic engineering at school, he was a talented artist good at various styles of painting. He told me, 'I

want to go to a place close to the ocean and mountains. The place should have a lot of fish and good views. I am tired of living in big cities which make me hard to breathe.’ Therefore, when a position was open in Newfoundland and he was offered the job, we moved to Newfoundland immediately. He really loved the place” (Katherine Huang 2012). Ye Zhao (also known as Kelvin Zhao), the previous owner of Oriental Snow convenience store at the Memorial University’s Smallwood Center, says, “I was tired of the lifestyle in China where all people around me only talked about money. The eagerness to money made me really uncomfortable and I didn’t want to be the one who indulged into the endless pursuit of money. Therefore, when an opportunity came out, I brought the whole family to Canada. When I found the life in bigger cities like Vancouver and Toronto were similar to the place where I came from, I moved again and eventually ended up in Newfoundland. Now I find myself peaceful and happy” (Ye Zhao 2009).

The decision to immigration is often not made through the consensus of all family members even though the intention is that immigration is for the benefit of the entire family. In many cases, it is impossible for children under the age of 18 to express their concerns about immigration even if their lives will be substantially changed in a new social and cultural environment. Simon Tam, a younger brother of Chan Chau Tam and the current co-op coordinator of the Faculty of Engineering at Memorial University, says, “I came to Canada in 1974. I came here because my parents wanted to immigrate to Canada and we were under 18, so we were required to accompany our parents otherwise they couldn’t come... I have to say that we agreed to come but we were not happy to come” (Simon Tam 2012). Many parents believe that their choice to immigrate is beneficial to the future of their children, who would appreciate the decision when they grow up, but many parents are not aware of the negative impact of forced immigration on

their children. For example, Lili Wang and her husband did not realize how much their daughter Rebecca Liu was affected by their immigration until they found an article written by her at the age of 17:

One day, when I was in my daughter's room to clear up her stuff to prepare for the renovation of our house, I found an article written by Rebecca when she was 17. The article was entitled "Red Shoes." For curiosity reason, I stopped what I was doing to read it. I was crying when I was reading. The article was about the cultural shocks that she had been experiencing since she was 2 when she first came to Canada. She talked about how cultural changes influenced her life. I had never thought that our immigration to Canada had so much impact on her. I have never imagined that a Chinese who came here when she was only 2 and had fully acculturated into local society, had been affected so deeply. I realized that, as a little immigrant, she actually thought a lot about immigration. Leaving a familiar place and relocating to a totally new place made her feel a stronger sense of identity loss. In the article, that pair of red shoes was said to be the last pair of Chinese shoes that she ever had. To be honest, I could not remember the colour of her shoes when she first arrived in Canada. In my understanding, I think that she just believed that that pair of shoes was red because she might learn from somewhere that the color red was the symbolic colour of Chinese culture. In this article, she had lots of complaints on us and she blamed us that we left her in China to go abroad to pursue our education. Her complaints reminded me an incident in one of my visits to her school in Ottawa. As a mother, I was always curious if she had a boyfriend. In many cases, she always tried to avoid direct answers. One time, she asked me instead, "do you have to know?" "Of course" I said. She then said, "Honestly speaking, I am afraid of being with someone in a relationship. I have a lot of male friends but I don't really want them to be too close because I am not sure if a relationship is real or reliable." I asked for reasons. She answered, "Because I was abandoned in China when I was only 1 and I was left behind again in Ontario with my aunt because of your transition from Edmonton to Newfoundland. I think, as family, we are the closest but I was left twice. So I don't really want to be too intimate with someone because I don't want to be abandoned again." I would never think about that immigration had that much negative affection on a little girl who actually knew little about China, but indeed, it happened. (Lili Wang 2012)

In addition to voluntary immigrants and those who came with their families, the Chinese population in Newfoundland also includes Chinese refugees who were forced to leave Vietnam in late 1970s because of racial conflicts between Chinese settlers and native Vietnamese, and Chinese children who were adopted by Newfoundlanders. Cham Tat, a Chinese Vietnamese who owns the Kim Le Tailor Shop at 120 Duckworth Street, St. John's, told me at Kim Hong's

Christmas Party in 2010, “I was born in an upper-middle class family in Vietnam. We Chinese were expelled by the Vietnamese government in the late 1970s because of the war between Vietnam and China. Life was really tough at the beginning and I was sent to the refugee camp in the Philippines and then transferred to Singapore. At the end, I was accepted by Canada. I so appreciate the generosity of Canada and its people’s hospitality to accept me. They take care of me and I am so glad that I am here” (Cham Tat 2010).

A number of Chinese girls adopted by local Newfoundland families also appeared in recent years, Tzu-Hao Hsu observes, “The current growth of the membership of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador can mainly be attributed to the increasing associate membership from local Newfoundland families who started to adopt Chinese children, mostly girls, in early 2000s. Obviously, for these children, their life in Newfoundland is much better than that in China because in China, they were orphans but here, they have families, parents and siblings who love and take care of them” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012).

Although Chinese immigration to Newfoundland as well as other parts of the world is sometimes an ordeal, the majority of immigrants do not regret the decision which was not only made for themselves, but also for the future of their whole family. Over the 109-year history of Chinese to Newfoundland, various factors can be attributed to explain why Chinese immigrants left their home countries and relocated to a place where they knew little and where they were once hostilely treated. As Kim Hong comments, “The place gives you and your family a hope, a hope to live in a better life. That is the dream of all people, not only Chinese” (Kim Hong 2009). At the turn of the 21st century, Chinese still come to Newfoundland for this same reason. Jackie Tan, the current owner of the Jackie Tan Restaurant in Corner Brook, a city in the west Newfoundland, says, “Do you know why most people in Hoi Ping and Toisan want to go abroad?

We were peasants in China and the agricultural work was hard, but you couldn't be paid off even if you were working hard. We earned less than ¥300 Chinese money a year and could barely afford eating meat. So, when opportunity comes, why don't people take it?" (Jackie Tan 2014). In the next Chapter Three, I discuss how Chinese immigrants in different historical periods organize their economic and social life in the land where a better life was expected.

Chapter Three

Convergence to Divergence: Living as “Chinese” in Newfoundland

Working to Survive

Every time that I try to ask Kim Hong about the cultural life of Chinese in the early days, he reminds me:

Over the years, people who came to United States and Canada including Newfoundland in those very early days, to a large extent, was for economic reasons. That particular part of China where they came from was quite poor so that people went overseas to earn some money and went back home again. A lot of them at the time came to Newfoundland and worked in laundries. Nowadays, you use an automatic laundry machine. You plug in and press buttons, and then the machine does laundry for you. You don't really see laundrymen doing the job. But in those earlier laundries, hard work was primarily done by hand. Laundrymen normally worked 6 days a week and a dozen hours a day, and lived poorly. When they got off from work, what they wanted would never be enjoying Chinese culture or tradition but sleep because they had to get up to work again in the next morning. Trying to survive was far more important than celebrating holidays and keeping customs. (Kim Hong 2011)

William Ping recalled that, when he was working at the Sing Lee Laundry in 1930s, he barely had enough time to sleep. Sometimes, he had to get up at 6:00 a.m. and often got off from work at 2:00 a.m. in the next morning. In his words, “You got to wash, to starch, to dry, to damp, to iron and to wrap the laundry. Sometimes I had supper at four o'clock in the next morning. I wash my laundry with tears” (Quoted in Hoe 2003, 35).

Chan Chau Tam defines this “working first” living style as the “old-fashioned Chinese style” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Although Tam came to Newfoundland in the early 1970s from Hong Kong, his life was similar to what the early immigrants experienced:

At the beginning, I had several jobs which made me very busy. In the morning, I was working in my corner store after I got up at 7. When my wife got everything done in the house, she would come down to help me at around 1p.m. Then I might take a nap for a couple of hours. At around 3, I had to go to work in the restaurant of the Skyline Motel. After I got off from Skyline, I rushed to work at the St. John's Hotel, which is the Ramada Hotel on Kenmount Road now. When I got home from work, it would be

really late at night, sometimes 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning. This kind of life repeated everyday in the early years of my life in Newfoundland. (Chan Chau Tam 2012)

Most first and second wave Chinese immigrants had received a high school education or equivalent at most. While those who operated shops or restaurants had to learn English to interact with customers, laborers usually did not have many opportunities beyond mission and church bible classes to practice their English. In the mind of these Chinese, hard working to support themselves and their families was not merely a part of their life; rather, it was their whole life. Billy Hong recalls:

Every night, after I closed my restaurant at around 10 or 11 p.m., I started to make chicken balls. That would be the most important thing to do because there would be no time to do this in the next morning. After making enough chicken balls, I begun to do some other pre-work like defrosting meat, cooking honey garlic ribs and making BBQ pork. When these were all done, I might chop vegetables, like onions, broccoli and green peppers. After that, I would wash dishes and clean the kitchen. It took me the whole night to prepare for the next day. At the beginning, I was the only one working in the kitchen so that sometimes I had no time to sleep at night. I had to work till next morning. When my kids got up, I would make them breakfast and then drive them to school. Then I might go to bed to get 3 or 4 hours sleep. My restaurant was open at 11 but customers would phone in to place order at 10 or 10:30. In that case, I got less sleep. I had no holidays in the early years. My restaurant was closed for only two days a year: Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Occasionally, I may keep it closed on New Year's Day. My restaurant was always busy and sometimes I had no time to use the washroom. There was no leisure time for me in the past and people saw me working all the time. I was working so hard because I wanted to give my children a better future. I wanted them to get good educations and find better jobs. (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013)

Sometimes, working extremely hard creates distance between parents and children, who feel ignored. Wallace Hong notes:

In the first few years at Kenmount, I lived in the back of the restaurant. Every morning I got up to make sure to open the business at 9. At night, I closed the restaurant at 1 a.m. and then went to the back of the restaurant to sleep. I didn't even get out of the place. The only time I left the restaurant was to get my hair cut. Sometimes, after we closed, I got to drive cooks and some other workers home before I could go to bed. It was really a tough work. My family, especially my kids actually didn't see me too much. One time, my wife told me: 'Your children don't know you. You've gone to work before they wake up, and they've gone to sleep before you come home. They always ask who you are. (Wallace Hong 2013)

Raised in this type of Chinese family, May Soo recalls:

Growing up in the 1960's in Grand Falls I spent very little quality time with my parents. They were very hardworking. They were there when I was hungry, needed money to buy school supplies or clothes. The basic necessities. As a family just the three of us, we only had one trip and that was to Expo 67 in Montreal and we drove up which was wonderful because we got to spend time together in the car. Other than that, my parents compensated their time by giving me material things. In our restaurant, we closed only one day of the year and that was Christmas Day. That was the only day that I felt like I was part of a real family. We ate together and talked. We didn't do much that was exciting but it meant a lot to me because we were together. (May Soo 2013)

Nowadays, as Daniel Wong observes, “the old idea of life has been changed and Chinese people, even those old-timers begin to learn how to enjoy their life” (Daniel Wong 2013). Chan Chau Tam, who identifies himself as having lived in the old-fashioned Chinese style, still had annual vacation trips out of Newfoundland when he operated the China House Restaurant (Chan Chau Tam 2012). His “laziness” and “high expense” were often criticized by the old timers who “tried every effort to save every penny” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Tam says, “I heard that a lot of old Chinese had never travelled to other places since they settled down in Newfoundland. One of the examples was Sam Hong, the previous owner of the Kenmount Restaurant. The first time he took a vacation trip outside of Newfoundland was because his children asked him to come with them to buy materials for the second renovation of their restaurant” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

The more recent generations of Chinese, who are working in traditional ethnic business sectors like restaurants, are more willing to separate work from the other aspects of their life. They devote some time for leisure, which is quickly filled with more social and cultural activities. Rennies So, the owner of Magic Wok Eatery, recalls:

Years ago, you would never see me leave my restaurant. I was always in there either doing pre-works or cooking. I used to serve dim sum in the morning during the weekends, so after I closed my restaurant at midnight on Fridays, I had to make dim sum for the next two days till very late at night. Then, after a few hours sleep, I had to get up early on Saturdays and Sundays to get everything prepared before we opened at 11. It was tough. But now, I decide to have more leisure time for myself, therefore, I

take Mondays off and my restaurant is only open for supper on the weekend. Now, I have a lot of time to do my own stuff. I even introduced traditional Chinese dragon boats to Newfoundland for racing purpose. I also close my restaurant for Chinese New Year and go back to Hong Kong to celebrate it with my family. (Rennies So 2009)

Highlights of Chinese Social Life in Newfoundland before Confederation

Early Chinese Organizations: Clan Associations and Others

Despite tensions between Chinese immigrants and native Newfoundlanders, and violent incidents such as murders that erupted in the Chinese community, Robert Hong writes that “the Chinese seem for the most part to have gone about their daily business of laundering with a quiet resolution,” and “they went relatively unnoticed by the newspapers and the local St. John’s community” (Hong 1987, 7). Because of their isolated lifestyle and the language barrier that prevented most of them from communicating in English, the Chinese community and its everyday life were mysterious to many Newfoundlanders, who stereotypically considered them, similar to their counterparts in other places, as indulging in gambling and opium-smoking (e.g. Ahmad 2007; *Evening Telegram* December 7, 1906; *Evening Herald* January 27, 1906; Chin 1996; Li 1998; Ling 2012; Wang 2010; Wickberg 1982). However, as the above narratives about Chinese worklife in Newfoundland indicate the day-to-day drudgery of washing, ironing and cooking afforded Chinese laundry workers little spare time. Hong also argues, “[There was] little time or occasion to venture forth into the wider St. John’s community for recreation” (Hong 1987, 7). When individuals are incapable of balancing working and the rest of their life, especially when they have few channels to release the subsequent tensions, the consequence could be serious and sometimes tragic. This was particularly true during the restriction period when Chinese in Newfoundland were also suffering restricted employment, gender imbalance and institutional discrimination. Pressures escalated until the stress resulted in brutal murders.

These two murders, one in 1922 and the other in 1936, shocked both the Chinese community and the whole island.

On May 3, 1922, a young laundry worker, Wo Fen Game, killed three of his co-workers and wounded another. He then attempted suicide but failed. Wo Fen Game was charged with murder and was put on trial after his recovery and discharged from hospital several months after the incident (*Daily News* November 21, 1922; *Evening Telegram* November 21, 1922; *Evening Telegram* November 24, 1922). He was finally sentenced to hang at the penitentiary grounds on December 16, 1922 at around 8 a.m. (*Evening Telegram* December 16, 1922). The Wo Fen Game case was frequently mentioned in local newspapers (e.g. *The Telegram*, December 16, 1997; May 3, 2000 and May 3, 2002) as the biggest murder in the history of Newfoundland. Presented as the epitome of early Chinese immigrants, Wo Fen Game was portrayed as an individual who “came to St. John's full of hope at the promise of an opportunity to earn more money than he was making in China. He probably viewed his stay here as short-term; when he had made enough money he would return to his wife and daughter and provide them with a better life. Little did he realize the tragic twist that fate had in store for him in Newfoundland” (*The Telegram* December 16, 1997).

The second case was the Quo John Shang murder, which was reported by *The Evening Telegram* under the headline, “Grand Jury Considers Murder Charge” on October 13, 1936 (*Evening Telegram* October 13, 1936, Hong et al. 1975, 32-34; Yu 1986, 21). Quo John Shang was charged in the murder of Eng Wing Kit (who was also known as Charlie Wing Kit or Check Yen) at the Royal Café, Water Street West, but eventually charges were dropped because of insufficient evidence.¹⁶ While the police’s inability to produce sufficient evidence in court cases

¹⁶ I could not find the article of the *Evening Telegram* and this is quoted from Yu. This case also appeared in the *Daily News*, but it was dated on July 4, 1938, which was two years later than that in the *Evening Telegram*. However, according to William Ping,

may suggest that members of the Chinese community rallied around each other in solidarity during times of trouble, the violence itself reflects the level of frustration and resentment Chinese immigrants experienced as a result of their historical and social circumstances. The formation of the Chinese clan associations for benevolent reasons is seen as a response to the Wo Fen Game's murder case (Yu 1986).

Because of the social isolation in Newfoundland and the geographic distance to their families and friends in China, in late 1920s and early 1930s, Chinese males organized themselves in terms of their surnames or regions of origin. These early groups were called "clan associations." Kim Hong says, "In Newfoundland, there were two private clubs, Tai Mei Club (自治会) (see Figure 3) and Hang Hing (Hong Hang) Society (同乡会), mainly established for friendship, fellowship, and gathering, socializing after a hard day working in the laundries. A Hoi Ping native Peter Hing, the last treasure of the Tai Mei Club, who owned the Hing's Restaurant in Port aux Basques from the 1960s to early 1980s and now works as a financial advisor in St. John's, recalls:

Au was the most popular Chinese surname in Newfoundland. Our family was the founding family of the Tai Mei Club and I served as the last treasurer. The whole purpose of the establishment of Tai Mei Club was to provide social life for the independent single men who were living in Newfoundland and having their families in China. Two things in people's social life were important: first, helping each other; like service of English, sending money back to China, and second, providing people from out of town a place to stay overnight, like a hostel, for a doctor's appointment or doing business. Just like a benevolent society. (Peter Hing 2014)

George Au also recalls, "There are some rooms in the Tai Mei Club for senior people to live for free of charge" (George Au 2014).

the murder happened in July, 1937 (Ping 1995a, 39-41)



Figure 3: Tai Mei Club (5 Bates Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland) in 1982. Courtesy of Newfoundland Head Tax Redress Organization, Inc. <http://www.nlhro.org/D78/sojourners-life>

In these clubs, Chinese men “got together to relax, chat, distribute or pickup updated information and entertain themselves by playing games or celebrating traditional festivals” (Kim Hong 2009). George Au continues, “When I was in St. John’s in the 1950s, I went to the Tai Mei Club all the time. I guess almost every day. They had some Chinese books and some maps of Newfoundland and Canada. They also had some Chinese instruments. I never gamble in my lifetime, but a lot of people went there to play mahjong or other Chinese gambling games” (George Au 2014). Peter Hing says, “During Chinese New Year, people got together to play mahjong. That is Chinese culture. No. 1, of course” (Peter Hing 2014). In the early days, Chinese clan associations were the center of local Chinese community.

On September 12, 2010, a Sunday afternoon after the morning service at Gower Street United Church, Kim Hong drove me to look at the locations of the former Chinese clubs in St. John's. In front a blue building, he told me:

See that blue building over there? That is 5 Bates Hill, and it was the property of the Au clan, which means people whose last names were Au, Aue and Que, they are the same in Chinese, all went there for leisure purpose. I did a little bit research and I think the Tai Mei Club was formed in 1927. A few years later, in 1932, people from my region, Toisan, founded their own society called Hong Hang Society or Hang Hing Society [Hong Hang means people from the same district] at 85 Gower Street, where was a Chinese laundry. After a few years, people moved the site of the society to 5 William Lane, which address does not exist anymore. I guess the city changed it to be part of George Street. Oh, right there, 12 George Street. All people, no matter if you were Hong, Tams (Toms and Hums), Jins (Jims or Gins), only if you were from Toisan, were all welcome. After 1950s when people's families started to come to Newfoundland, family life became dominant and the social life in clubs became less usual. So in fact, the Hong Hang Society closed in late 1960s and we sold the property in early 1970s. The other one, the Tai Mei Society of the Aus existed till about 1990s. Their building was also sold. People used to get together on Saturday evenings and Sundays to chat and exchange news in China with each other. Some of them went there to read Chinese newspapers, which usually came from Montreal or Toronto and play mah-jong or other games. Chinese New Year and other Chinese festivals such as the moon festival were also celebrated in these clubs. At that time, going to the bars on Sundays was also a common activity in Newfoundland. But Chinese had very limited English skill so they didn't really socialize with members of the local society. Also, money was limited and many of them didn't have a car, either. (Kim Hong 2010)

Studies of Chinese immigration to relatively "remote" or "rural" areas in North America by scholars such as Huping Ling (2005, 2009), Alison Marshall (2009, 2010) and Ling Arenson (2009) emphasize that, unlike in bigger cosmopolitan cities with a larger Chinese population, smaller communities had no concentrated Chinese neighborhoods or "Chinatowns" that were larger than a block or two. Most of the buildings in these small areas were destroyed and today there are no vestiges of once thriving small Chinese centers. Because of the small population and the nature of the laundry business that required Chinese immigrants to scatter to avoid intra-ethnic cutthroat competition, a physically recognized Chinatown in St. John's or in other cities or towns in Newfoundland never materialized.

Although a physical Chinese center may be absent, a “Chinatown structure” exists in various Chinese communities across the American continent, even in remote and rural locations. One of the earliest appearances of this term was in Gunther Barth’s *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850–1870* (1964), in which the term was used to define the structure of the societies of Chinese immigrants in America through kinship and/or other social ties. According to Barth, the Chinatown structure was an indigenous American invention. In this thesis, I use this term in Barth’s sense to refer to a community structure involving a few community leaders or wealthy merchants and their families who are in charge of important internal or external affairs of the community with the support or submission of the majority of other not as well educated co-ethnic labors and their families. The “Chinatown structure” was the response of Chinese immigrants, especially those of relatively meager socio-economic means, to the harsh conditions they faced in their new home. In North American society, early Chinese immigrants lacked human capital, English language proficiency, and employment information so that they had to rely on a small group of co-ethnic labor brokers or merchants who were, most of time, the immigrants’ villagers or relatives. These individuals were expected to be reliable in the traditional Chinese society.

As a successful merchant and community leader, Au Kim Lee was recognized as the “ambassador of the Chinese community” (Kim Hong 2009). In a letter responding to what he felt was a biased inspection and false report on his laundry by inspector O’Brian (*Evening Telegram* February 12, 1906; *Evening Herald* February 12, February 13, and February 15, 1906), Au Kim Lee mentioned that he had only ten regular staff members in his laundry. The other seven Chinese men who were seen by the health inspector in the building were his countrymen who had no place to stay in St. John’s (*Daily News* March 3, 1906). Krista Chatman Li notices that,

“What is interesting in Kim Lee’s defence of his countrymen was the fact that he chose to defend himself and other laundrymen at all” (Li 2010, 176). He fulfilled his sense of obligation toward his countrymen and in turn achieved their public admiration. George Au recalls:

My first stop in Newfoundland was Gander [a town in central Newfoundland] because I flew in Newfoundland instead of taking a boat trip as many other people who came at the same time. There was no Chinese waiting for me at the airport because people like my father didn’t know the schedule of flight connections. After I talked to the immigration officer, a few hours later, an old gentleman came. Instead of my father, that was [Au] Kim Lee, who was the Chinese community leader, who knew a lot of government people. I knew Kim Lee by the name, but I never met him before I came. He was the one who met me up in Gander. I remember Kim Lee was an old gentleman at the time. He was a tall fellow and his English was quite good. Kim Lee flew from St. John’s to Gander to pick me up, and then we flew back to St. John’s. (George Au 2014)

I remember at the flower service in 2009, which was the first year I attended this event, a Chinese man at the Mount Pleasant Cemetery asked around if anyone knew where Au Kim Lee was buried. When he was asked why he wanted to know, he said, “I came here on behalf of my father who passed away in Calgary recently. Before his death, my dad told me, ‘Go back to Newfoundland and bring some flowers to Mr. Au Kim Lee, who took care of me when I was a young man. Tell him that I am coming to see him.’” In this sense, because of merchants like Au Kim Lee, Chinese laundries served as a symbolic “Chinatown,” which sheltered early Chinese immigrants from local hostility and persecution. These symbolic ethnic enclaves strengthened immigrant networks and created opportunities for newcomers to form clan societies and other kinds of ethnic associations.

From the establishment of the first Chinese association, the Tai Mei Club of the Au clan in 1928, to the early 1950s, there were four Chinese organizations in Newfoundland: two clan associations - the Tai Mei Club, the Hong Hang Society, a political organization the Chinese War Relief Association 抗日救国会 (which was disbanded shortly after World War II) and a

business organization the Chinese Cooperative Society 合作社. The Chinese Cooperative Society, presided over by William Ping, was founded for Chinese residents in the St. John's area who intended to develop import/export trade between China and Newfoundland (Kim Hong 2009). In addition to the Chinese Cooperative Society, the other three associations served as places for meeting or entertainment for Chinese on a daily basis. They not only spoke out collectively on behalf of Chinese residents in Newfoundland to both government and the general public, but also functioned as a liaison to connect Chinese overseas to the then Chinese government. During his visit to St. John's from Ottawa in 1940, Dr. Chao-Ying Shih, the Chinese Consul-General in Canada, attended meetings of the four Chinese societies. Afterwards, he "visited every Chinese establishment in St. John's and spoke with every member of the community here" (*Daily News* October 19, 1940).

In these organizations, immigrants felt at home as they interacted with their countrymen face-to-face, spoke their native languages and played their traditional games like mahjong. Jeffery Weeks notes, "Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic, it gives you a sense on personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvements with others" (Weeks 1990, 88). The emergence of early Chinese associations in Newfoundland greatly strengthened the ties of Chinese immigrants to each other and reinforced their sense of being Chinese in a foreign land. However, at the same time, some individuals such as William Ping were excluded from both clan associations because they were neither Aus nor from Toisan. In many cases, "they were also invited to these clan clubs but to some degree, they were still more or less outsiders" (Kim Hong 2013). In the years

before Confederation, the only association uniting all Chinese was the Chinese War Relief Association.

The KMT and the Chinese War Relief Association

Evidence overlooked by these histories, shows that as early as 1913 a KMT (Chinese Nationalist League or Kuomintang) branch had been established in St. John's. In the *International Chinese Business Directory of the World for the Year 1913*, there lists a "Chung Hwa National Club," which, according to the Chinese characters written next to the English translation, is Kuomintang (Wong 1913, 1385). This KMT branch was located at 41 Prescott Street, which was also the location of Fong Lee Laundry (Wong 1913, 1385). The connection of the KMT and Fong Lee Laundry is unknown; however, a majority of Chinese laundrymen were the loyal supporters of KMT. In the memoir of William J. Browne, a citizenship and immigration judge in Newfoundland, he writes, "All of them [Chinese] were supporters of the Nationalist cause under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, who I had always admired" (Browne 1984, 4). I trust the judgement of Browne on the political affiliation of those early Chinese immigrants because of his close relationship with the Chinese community. Browne notes, "I made many friends amongst the Chinese...I organized one of their two societies, the Hong Hing Society [Hong Hang Society] on William's Lane. I also helped them get close relatives in from Hong Kong. Sometimes, I had a suspicion that the people who were brought in weren't really 'close' relatives" (Browne 1984, 4). Another piece of evidence indicating political affiliation to Nationalist was supported by Kim Hong. According to Hong, the decision to make the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador a non-political organization was objected to by many old timers who even insisted that the Nationalist anthem be singing at the annual Chinese

New Year celebration (Kim Hong 2009). Unlike the important role that KMT branches played in the political, social and cultural life of the early Manitoban Chinese community (Marshall 2009, 2011a and 2011b), activities organized by KMT in Newfoundland were not public and not publicised. Perhaps the reason for this might be the absence of a merchant class among the Chinese in Newfoundland so that nobody was able to take over the leadership.

In the early days, many Chinese in Newfoundland planned regular visits to their hometowns in China. With the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945), their journeys became unsafe and, to some extent, impossible. The war strengthened and lengthened the loneliness and suffering of Chinese in Newfoundland. Many Chinese were separated from their families for many years and some of them lost contact forever. However, they never forgot their responsibilities to their homeland and to the people who were fighting for their freedom. In 1937, the Chinese in Newfoundland started to contribute \$3 per month and supported various fundraising activities for China (*Daily News* July 13, 1943). In 1940, the Chinese in Newfoundland formed the Chinese War Relief Association to raise funds “through regular individual contributions and special events held throughout the year” (Pitt 1981, 426) (see Figure 4 and 5). Au Kim Lee was the president of the Association, Davey Fong was in charge of finance and William Ping served as secretary.

Marshall writes that the Chinese War Relief Association, a group that was active in St. John’s, was actually an arm of KMT during the period of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) (Marshall 2011a). On January 4, 1942, a meeting hosted by the Chinese War Relief Association was held in the Society of United Fisherman (S.U.F) Hall with the attendance of the whole Chinese community in St. John’s and several important local guests including St. John’s Mayor, Mr. Carnell, Hon. Ira Wild, Commissioner for Finance and Customs of Newfoundland,

and the solicitor for the Chinese in St. John's, Mr. Gordon Higgins (*Daily News* January 5, 1942). At this meeting, the contribution and generosity of Chinese in Newfoundland to China and the Allies were recognized by representatives of the Newfoundland government and the general public. It was the first time that the Chinese were publically described as “good citizens who conducted their business in a very creditable manner” and were invited to make “the city a better place for all to live in” (*Daily News* January 5, 1942).



Figure 4: War Relief Certificate (front) (face value of \$5). Courtesy of Chan Chau Tam.

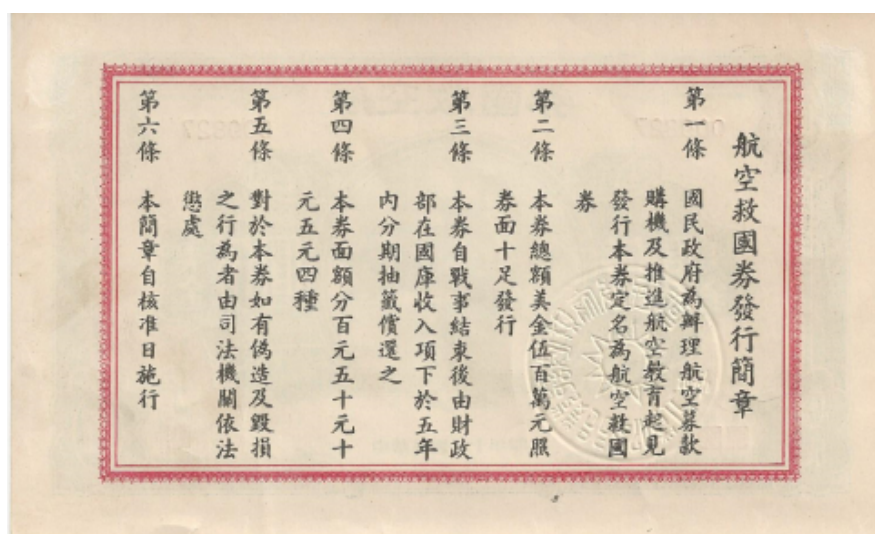


Figure 5: War Relief Certificate (back). Courtesy of Chan Chau Tam.



Figure 6: Chinese Consul - General and Delegates (Daily News, 19 October 1940).



Figure 7: Dr. Chao-Ying Shih and the Chinese in St. John's, 1940. Courtesy of May Soo (In this photo, Kim Chow Tom, also known as Harry Chow, is May Soo's paternal grandfather).

During the war period, because of the effort of the Chinese War Relief Association and its previous informal fellowship, some representatives of the Chinese consulate of Canada came to Newfoundland to visit the local Chinese community. After the visit of Dr. Chao-Ying Shih, the Consul General for China in Canada in October, 1940 (see Figure 6 and 7), in 1943, Mr. Kai-Shau Fung, Chinese Consul for Canada also visited Newfoundland and addressed at the meeting of the annual anniversary of the Sino-Japanese War (*Daily News* October 19, 1940; October 21, 1940; July 13, 1943). When World War II ended in 1945, Chinese residents of Newfoundland joined in the parade with people of different ethnic backgrounds to celebrate the hard-won victory. The contributions of local Chinese to the Allies in the World War II and their patriotism to China helped to change the Chinese's social marginality and significantly enhanced their reputation as responsible citizens. The shared experience signalled a kind of acceptance; the Chinese were no longer foreign sojourners but permanent members of the city and the province.

Nowadays, contributions of Chinese in World War II are not well mentioned and many people of Chinese descent know little about this part of the community history. But there are some exceptions. Simon Tam says, "When I was working at the Seven Seas Restaurant during the summer of 1974 in Corner Brook, the owner of the restaurant, Wing Soon Oue [same as Au in Chinese] told me a lot of stories about the past. It was strange that he didn't talk too much about the tough time working in the laundry. He seemingly preferred to talk more about the contribution of local Chinese. He was the person who opened my eyes to see the great contribution of overseas Chinese to China, especially during the wartime. From him, I learned to appreciate the old generation more" (Simon Tam 2012).

Christianity

In addition to early Chinese clan associations and political organizations, the history of the Chinese in Newfoundland is also closely associated with Christianity. Chinese church attendees in Newfoundland before Confederation were all relatively poor single men or married bachelors. In some ways, it was Christian churches that allowed Chinese men to re-establish a positive social image of Chinese in Newfoundland and made them more acceptable.

Apart from physical, linguistic and cultural differences, the possibility of conversion to the Christianity also played an important role in the social acceptance of Chinese immigrants in Newfoundland. Religion was a big concern in the House of Assembly and Legislative Council during the passage of “The Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons.” Some members worried, “What would be the result if the Chinamen were to start preaching their religion in this country?” (*Evening Herald* April 26, 1906), especially given that this country was “a civilized, Christian nation” (*Evening Herald* May 11, 1906). The public voice heard in local newspapers like the *Evening Telegram* also expressed fear about the influx of Chinese in terms of religion. On May 1, 1906, when the paper addressed the arrival of fifty-odd Chinese, the nature of Newfoundland as a Christian country was re-emphasized: “The experience in every Christian country is that Chinese immigration is not only undesirable but positively injurious” (*Evening Telegram* May 1, 1906).

In order to settle into Newfoundland quickly, the Chinese joined local churches almost immediately after their arrival. Chinese attendance in churches in Newfoundland can be traced back to 1895. Within two months of their arrival, the first Chinese immigrants were attending Sunday afternoon services at the Wesley Methodist Church (Chang 1978). The liaison between churches and Chinese in Newfoundland was established by a retired minister Rev. Dan Martin of

Wesley Methodist Church, who, in William Ping's memoir was called "the father of Chinese." In general, Rev. Martin did two important things for Chinese. First, he introduced Christianity to the Chinese who were thought to be inassimilable because of their pagan faith by encouraging them to regularly attend Sunday services rather than work in the laundries. Second, he enthusiastically assisted Chinese acculturation into the host community by organizing local female volunteers to teach the Chinese immigrants English and other social skills on a one-on-one basis in Sunday school and by inviting lonely Chinese residents to visit his house on holidays (Ping 1995b, 6-7). The continuous efforts and encouragement of Rev. Martin gradually changed the life of many Chinese laundrymen who suffered physical and mental hardship. Although hampered due to their "unrespectable" occupation, language barrier and a lot of cultural misunderstanding, the Chinese started to interact with Newfoundlanders outside of their business.

On holidays, especially important ones like Christmas, Rev. Martin invited every Chinese resident to his house for dinner. On those special days, his wife and daughters usually prepared a big roasted turkey and other delicacies for these events. After supper, Rev. Martin's wife played piano and the whole family sang happy holiday songs. In addition, his three daughters asked Chinese men, especially those who were single, to dance. It was a great honour for the socially isolated young bachelors who felt extraordinarily nervous on the occasions perhaps because of traditional Confucian doctrines that did not allow any physical contact between unmarried males and females. However, they "also very enjoyed such wonderful times in their life in Newfoundland" (Ping 1995b, 6-7).

Intermarriage

As interactions between Chinese males and local females increased, Chinese workers were gradually recognized as Chinese men rather than as only “Chinese” by members of the local Newfoundland community. Intermarriage between Chinese and British Newfoundlanders became more popular. According to Kim Hong, there were some Chinese immigrants (such as Charlie Hong) who married local females before Confederation (Kim Hong 2009). This number represented more than twenty percent of the total Chinese population at the time. The first baby of Chinese descent born in Newfoundland in 1906 was the offspring between a Chinese man called Tom Ting and an English woman who had moved here from Montreal. *The Daily News* had the details: “The first Chinese baby to be born in St. John’s saw the light on Sunday week last at the residence of Mrs. Leonard, George Street. The father is Tom Ting, who represents the Empire League –an organization for the mutual benefit of the Chinese. The mother is a young English woman, who met her husband in Montreal, where they were united in wedlock. The infant is healthy and both child and mother are doing well” (*Daily News* October 2, 1906).

Intermarriage between Chinese and Newfoundlanders was somewhat restricted by social codes on both sides. Kim Hong recalls, “In those very early years, this kind of thing was not supposed to happen because, traditionally, Chinese parents would never accept a Caucasian daughter-in-law. The purity of blood was really important.”¹⁷ But since at least 20 or 30 years ago, intermarriage has been fairly well accepted in the community, except for some older people, like my mother who might still disagree with it. However, they also recognize that it is the way that people cannot control in a multicultural society like this. If it doesn’t happen in this generation, it will happen in the next generation” (Kim Hong 2009). Charlie Snook says, “I heard a story of

¹⁷ Alison Marshall also notes that, in prairie Canada, Chinese parents wanted their children to marry only “pure” Chinese and Chinese children with mixed background often felt looked down upon by their peers having two Chinese parents (Marshall 2014, 13-15).

Hayford Fong. Hayford left his Chinese wife and married a Newfoundland girl. His father didn't like this and told him, 'Hayford, you give up the Newfoundland girl and go back to your Chinese girl.' He did that and went to Carbonear to open a Chinese restaurant" (Charlie Snook 2009). In regards to attitudes of Newfoundlanders towards intermarriage, Snook continues, "The Chinese men lived in a lonely life but they also intermingled with local Newfoundland girls. But intermarriage was not common and not allowed at that time. It was a terrible life for them. They were lonely. No question. Charlie Hong was a community leader for a long time and he had a lot of local friends. He actually married my cousin Fronie, who was from my hometown called Grand Bank. When they got married, people there laughed at my uncle Jacob Matthews. They said, 'Oh, you gave your daughter to a Chinese? You must be crazy'" (Charlie Snook 2014).

Intermarriage between Chinese and native Newfoundlanders created the first Canadian-born generation of Chinese, many of whom self-identified as Chinese descendants and were proud of their ethnic and cultural heritage. Bill Ping, senior officer working for the Canadian Coast Guard as marine engineer and son of William Ping and his Newfoundland wife Ethel Squibb from



Figure 8: William Ping and Ethel Squibb, Courtesy of Bill Ping.

Carbonear Newfoundland (see Figure 8), says, “I grew up as a half Chinese and I still consider myself Chinese, a second-generation Chinese, because of my connection with dad. My dad was a Chinese” (Bill Ping 2012). At the same time, intermarriage also provides children born in those families a chance to choose their ethnicity. Andrew Leung, who was born to his Chinese father Arthur Leung and British mother Cathy Howell, would prefer to identify himself as a descendant with mixed background.

Changes in Chinese Social Life in the Post-Confederation Era

The first noticeable change in Chinese social life in Newfoundland was due to Confederation with Canada which pushed the Newfoundland government to adopt new immigration guidelines that ended the bachelor life for many married Chinese settlers, whose parents, spouses and children were left in China. Kim Hong, as one of those who benefited from the new immigration policy, recalls how social life was changed in the Chinese community:

After 1950s, a lot of female spouses and children came to Newfoundland. Subsequently the structure of the society was changed and family became dominant in the life of many people. Therefore, men spent much less time in those Chinese clubs. As a result, the Hong Hang Society was closed down in late 1960s and we sold the property in early 1970s. The other one, the Tai Mei Society existed till about 1990s and the building was also sold. So in the 50s and 60s when the families came, we started to get together socially, usually on Sundays which was more suitable because laundries, restaurants and other businesses were not open. Many newly-arrived women and children had strong desire to know more co-ethnics as well as people from non-Chinese community, so local churches, the local United Churches in particular, launched outreach programs to help so-called minorities and newcomers to adjust to local society. For this reason, a lot of functions were held at the facilities of local churches. I think that the initial one to host this kind of functions was the George Street United Church. Later on we moved to the Cochrane United Church, where was also the place for Chinese Sunday school. A few years later, we changed to the Gower Street United Church. Offering English lessons was one of the greatest services that the church provided in the earlier days. Every Sunday, along with many regular church people, some Chinese people would also go and many of them would bring a book with them. In this book, there were Chinese and English translations, and the church would assign volunteer per person, usually a lady, to sit next to the person to teach him a little bit English that he needed to

learn. That was the way that a lot of old timers learnt their limited English. In the 60s, with the help of churches, Gower Street United Church in particular, Chinese families were organized for social gatherings. Initially, there were only several times a year especially on special occasions like Moon Festival and Chinese New Year. (Kim Hong 2009)

Because of the close relationship between the Chinese community and a few other local United Churches in St. John's, especially the Gower Street United Church, some Chinese associations were organized under the auspice of the churches' outreach programs. For example, Kim Hong recalls, "in around 1957, at the Cochrane Street United Church, David Decker, who was the director of the local Red Cross, gathered together some Chinese children like myself whose families were affiliated with the church to form the Newfoundland Young Chinese Christian Association (Y.C.C.A). However, this association had a short life" (Kim Hong 2009).

In the early 1960s, a Presbyterian missionary, Elsie Lee, who perhaps was inspired by the social gospel movement, in which Christian ethics were applied to solve social problems such as poverty and inequality (McDowell 1982; Edwards 2003), noticed the relative isolation of Chinese women and attempted to reach out to them through the women of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Her plan to accelerate community integration gained support from various sources and some functions were organized for the Chinese women to attend. These kinds of events strengthened the previously loose ties among many of the Chinese women. In 1972, the Chinese Women Society of Newfoundland was founded at the Gower Street United Church with Jeannie Aue elected as President, Kitty Lem as Vice-President and Song Hong (Hum Kwan Song) as Treasure.

As part of the churches' outreach program, a United Church committee was formed to organize social activities for all Chinese in St. John's. It included: Dr. A.S. Butt, Dr. Stella Burry, Rev. Levi Mehaney (who joined this committee later), Marguerine Mehaney, Kim Hong,

William Ping, Mabel McKinley, Dorothy Louis, Marion Pitt and others. Under the leadership of this committee, various functions were organized in order to provide more opportunities for Chinese and non-Chinese residents of the city to interact with each other. At that time, these church-hosted activities were the central events in the social life of many local Chinese. Chan Chau Tam says, “In the early days, functions in the local Chinese community was rare, so people of the Gower Street United Church encouraged younger fellows like us to organize some social and cultural events like Chinese New Year celebrations. However, at the beginning, these activities were all organized by local people and Chinese just participated” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

The events were successful and the attendance increased from “the dozen or so at the first party in 1966 to the hundreds of men, women and children who attended in 1976” (Pitt 1981, 427). Daniel Wong, who was an undergraduate student at the time, recounts that, “before the foundation of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Chinese Student Society, as students, we were often invited to attend parties featuring special holidays organized by some senior Chinese who affiliated to the church. I think William Ping was the key organizer at the time. Most of the activities were held at the lecture hall of Gower Street United Church” (Daniel Wong 2013). Kim Hong confirms that, “I should say a few years before the association was formed, Mr. William Ping and the so-called lady committee did make efforts to organize some social functions at the Gower Street United Church’s Lecture Hall. But at the time, there were no selected or appointed leadership people. People like me did often voluntarily do certain things like assisting with organization of celebrations and so on” (Kim Hong 2011).

Of all Chinese social activities in Newfoundland in the early post-Confederation period, the annual flower service, a local form of traditional Chinese Qing Ming 清明, a holiday for Chinese

people to visit and clean their ancestors' graves. The gathering of annual flower service which began as latest as in the early 1940s (Linda Fong 2014), was the most well-attended and considered the most important. Kim Hong comments:

According to my knowledge, one peculiar thing that the Chinese community in Newfoundland has, but may not exist elsewhere, is a tradition, which goes long way back to the old days. The belief is: if a person dies in Newfoundland, he (or she), should be buried in St. John's cemetery where his/her family and friends are buried. So constantly with very few exceptions, almost all people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland are buried in St. John's, subsequently, there is a flower service each year, bringing people outside of St. John's to attend. This annual flower service in Newfoundland can be traced back to 1920s or 30s, which was before my time. An associated belief is, being buried in St. John's is not only close to your friends and relatives, but, secures that there will be some people who will look after the cemetery and clean up your spot for you if you have no families around. You see, there will always be somebody who comes to visit you and brings some flowers and fruits every year. The date of the annual flower service is a fixed date which is the first Sunday after Regatta Day, which is the first Wednesday in August in St. John's. I think people in the early days picked the date because in August, the weather in Newfoundland was normally nice. (Kim Hong 2009)

Regarding the annual flower service, Chan Chau Tam observes, "On flower service day, all Chinese came out from smaller communities across the island to St. John's. After the service in cemeteries, people would get together to socialize with each other. Sometimes, they would play a little bit gambling games in either Tai Mei club or some Chinese restaurants" (Chan Chau Tam 2012). For Chinese not having deceased relatives buried in Newfoundland, the post-service gathering was mainly for entertainment or other social reasons. It was the annual gathering of Chinese on flower service day that led to the formation of a provincial Chinese association.

The Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and Its Socio-cultural Roles

An Umbrella for All Chinese

At the annual flower service, the on-duty minister of the Gower Street United Church was/is normally invited to lead the prayer at the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, which belongs to the United

Church. Aware of the large presence of Chinese population in early 1970s, the then minister Rev. Levi Mehaney suggested community leaders and active participants like William Ping and Kim Hong to form a local Chinese association to provide more community services to the local Chinese and to promote Chinese culture and tradition under the rubric of Canadian multiculturalism to the general public of Newfoundland. In a discussion of the origin of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Kim Hong recalls:

That gathering of annual flower service provided me an idea back to 1976, “Hey, instead of the association in St. John’s, we should have it provincially.” We all knew that, even at its peak time, we had only 1,200-1300 Chinese on this island which have a half million population, but we had a lot of people buried in St. John’s. That is the reason for many families across the island to come to St. John’s at least once a year. Because we had people come across all of Newfoundland to St. John’s at least once a year, we then decided to make a provincial organization rather than a St. John’s association. Also, one of the functions of the Chinese association in my mind was looking after the cemeteries, which should be looked after by a group of organized people. We also decided that the association would have no religion involved and it would have no political affiliation. So we had no problem to unite everybody, no matter you were from Taiwan, Mainland China, Malaysia, Indonesia or Hong Kong. In the early days, most Chinese came from Canton, southern part of China, like Toisan and Hoi Ping in particular. They were the ones who ran restaurants, and they were the ones who operated laundries. When the time went on, we had more people coming from various places, such as Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, and Malaysia. People came from all the places, but people didn’t look at geography. They said, “I am a Chinese and I live in Canada, so I should participate in the Chinese association. Our association was established in 1976 for the purpose of promoting multiculturalism, to be good neighbours, to be good citizens, to be good fellows appreciating Canada. At the same time, we also tried to promote Chinese culture. Hopefully our children and grandchildren would learn something, preserve something. These were the thoughts back to 1976. (Kim Hong 2009)

Kim Hong’s words indicate that, in the mid-1970s, a majority of Chinese in Newfoundland were still Chinese old timers and their descendants, but the population of newcomers, especially those professionals who came to Newfoundland from all over the world, was gradually increasing. That is to say, the Chinese community in Newfoundland was experiencing a steady transformation from the homogeneous to the diverse. In fact, the Chinese immigration pattern

after Confederation, particularly in the post-1967 period, has shifted from chain- or family-oriented immigration to a more complex model that represents different immigration threads instead of monogenesis. According to the *Chinese Handbook*, in 1978, Newfoundland had forty-four Chinese restaurants and take-out businesses, twenty-six medical doctors, five scientists, six engineers, seven teaching personnel at Memorial University of Newfoundland, four other educators and some other professionals (Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1978, 44-46).

The emergence of Chinese professionals contributed to the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Chinese community in Newfoundland. Instead of restricting themselves to their ethnic community, these professionals, who are often employed in non-ethnic institutions, expanded their social circles to include friends who were from non-Chinese groups. In an interview with E.T. Tjan, I was told that, in early days, the Chinese friends he had in Newfoundland were some doctors who were his schoolmates in Taiwan or those working in the General Hospital in St. John's. He adds: "In our group, most of us didn't have any interaction with those restaurant people" (E. T. Tjan 2012).

Tjan's comment suggests that, in many cases, the Chinese working in restaurants or in other traditional ethnic businesses have different interests and concerns from those of Chinese professionals. Chan Chau Tam comments: "Sometimes, people often socialize with people who have similar backgrounds as them. Like us, normally we just visit people who run restaurants because we restaurant people have more in common. When we planned to form the Chinese Association in the 1970s, there had been a number of Chinese professionals already. There were engineers, doctors and professors. Those professionals, in our words, they were intelligent people, who had their own social groups. I don't mean that we cannot get along with each other or

communicate with each other, but I know that we are interested in different things” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

Corresponding to the demographic changes of the Chinese community in Newfoundland, local Chinese associations began to tentatively accommodate the increasing diversity. As mentioned earlier, prior to 1949, Chinese associations were mainly clan societies, which can be categorized as *Huiguan* 会馆, a traditional Chinese congregation linked by kinship, shared territorial identity and other kinds of *guanxi* or social relationships in the Chinese context. According to James H. Cole, *Huiguan* and its activities fall into six categories: 1) economic; 2) political administrative and judicial; 3) educational and cultural; 4) social and entertainment; 5) religious and 6) philanthropic (Cole 1996, 159). However, all these functions are only for group members, while outsiders are strictly excluded. Therefore, in the context of large-scale Chinese immigration when individuals are diverse in terms of their social, cultural and economic backgrounds, many early organizations were limited in meeting the needs of newcomers. Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim point out the weaknesses of these associations:

First, membership bases of traditional organizations, which were characteristics of kinship and village ties, were eroded by the diversity of socio-economic background of the newcomers. Second, the structure of traditional organizations built on service to illiterate or semi-literate low-skilled, and socially excluded sojourners has become insufficient for accommodating the settlement and mobility needs of newcomers in a relatively open mainstream society. (Zhou and Kim 2006, 240)

In addition to the impact of external forces on these traditional Chinese associations, internal forces helped change outdated structures. Having grown up in Chinese laundries and restaurants and been long exposed to a traditional Chinese environment, some immigrant offspring decided to serve the community as adults. Some earned a post-graduate education and they were more assimilated to the middle-class mainstream. They were not as bound by the

“Chinatown structure” as their immigrant parents and not as ruled by the power of elders as in a traditional society. Rather, “On a progressive political agenda, they sought to break away from old Chinese traditions and power structures, opting instead for community reform through the establishment of social service and civic organizations” (Zhou and Kim 2006, 236). Kim Hong well represents this new generation of Chinese in Newfoundland. At present, there are some other younger people of Chinese descent who are also willing to serve the community. Alick Tsui, an optometrist originally from Hong Kong working at the Janeway Hospital in St. John’s, says, “Our president Mary Gin [2009-2012] was born here and she is giving back. Again, Jonathon [Wong], he was born here too and he is helping out. And also Justin and Matthew [So], they are second generation Chinese who take over the leadership of the lion dance. It is so nice to have them helping out” (Alick Tsui 2012). The family and district-based clan associations gradually became entertainment clubs for elders and their membership declined. Jackie Tan recalls, “I had been to the Tai Mei Club once in mid-1990s when I was working at the Taiwan Restaurant in St. John’s. There were only two tables of people who were playing mahjong. I heard from some old people that the place was always packed in the old days” (Jackie Tan 2014).

From the late 1950s onward, a small number of new ethnic organizations formed as listed previously, these were registered as non-profit organizations and supported by all levels of governments, churches and private foundations, were established by the Chinese in Newfoundland. Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Evelyn Hu-Dehart label these newly-formed ethnic associations as “voluntary associations,” which “originate out of the migrant communities and are controlled by them, hence not official and nongovernmental, even though many of these might have worked in collaboration with the colonial governments or the governments of the host country” (Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart 2006, 6). Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart further

identify three key characteristics of this new type of ethnic organization. Foremost, these associations – *shetuan* 社團 (distinguished from *Huiguan*), go “beyond the parochial Chinese community” and serve as “ethnic and cultural brokers between the Chinese community and the wider society.” (Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart 2006, 14) The second feature is that the new associations not only provide mutual aid and protection for its members, but also “actively promote commercial, cultural, education and related interests to members and the wider communities” (Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart 2006, 14). A third “new orientation” of *shetuan* is to assist and accelerate the acculturation of Chinese to the mainstream society (Kuah-Pearce and Hu-Dehart 2006, 14).

In the late 1960s, the local Chinese community as a whole was more visible to the general public. For instance, in 1967 during Canada’s centennial birthday, some members of the Chinese community actively participated in various celebrations and played a key role in organizing an International Night party at the old campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland on Parade Street (Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1995, 13). The more frequent participation of Chinese residents in public events and the like indicated that, to some extent, Chinese had stepped out of their previous small co-ethnic social circles and begun to integrate themselves as a part of a Newfoundland ethnic mosaic.

In order to better communicate to all Chinese in Newfoundland, promote Chinese culture and traditions, and make the voices of Chinese citizens heard by outsiders, an umbrella organization was needed. In December 1976, after a relatively long period of preparation, with the keen support of Chinese residents in Newfoundland, the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (CANL) was officially formed and registered with the provincial government as a non-profit community association. The membership of the CANL was drawn

from all over the province. Its executive members were elected biennially at the Christmas party. Kim Hong served as the first president with three vice presidents representing Chinese from different parts of the province: Sing Lang Au (St. John's) for Eastern Newfoundland, Tom Chow (Grand Falls) for Central Newfoundland, and Kim Ham Tom (Hamme Tom Chow) of Corner Brook for Western Newfoundland (Kim Hong 2009).

紐芬蘭華協會

(Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador)

The newly formed association was warmly welcomed by Chinese people in Newfoundland. Kim Hong recalls, "At the beginning, we received great support and almost everybody joined us no matter where you were from" (Kim Hong 2009). According to the meeting minutes of the CANL on January 30, 1977, "Close to 95% of the Chinese community in Newfoundland and Labrador are members of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador." The association actively promoted itself. As Kim Hong showed me, at the executive meeting on May 22, 1977, the membership issue was addressed. It seemed that, at this meeting, the executives of the Association realized that some Chinese families in this province were still not known to the group because these families were new arrivals or less social. To involve these families, an invitation from the Association was sent directly to the family members:

Chinese Association of NFLD
P.O. Box 7311
St. John's
March 6, 1977

Dear Mr. Leung,

We just got your name from one of your friend and thought you might be interested in joining our Association which has over 300 memberships at the moment not including children. Please let me know your desire by calling 753-1903 and we look after the rest. The 1977 membership fee is \$5.00.

Yours Truly,

Kim Hong President

It was assumed that some fifteen to twenty new families would join the association in 1977 (Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1977c). However, at the meeting on May 22, 1977, the executive discovered that approximately twenty to thirty families showed little interest in the organization. According to a survey conducted by the Association, some major reasons for the lack of interest were as follows (1) “see no values in it,” (2) “not much benefit for us,” (probably true for some of the out-of-town (outside St. John’s) people – comment by the executive members of the association) (3) their employment is not permanent, e.g. students, doctors and etc. (4) too busy, got no time (very few – comment by the association) (5) not interested (very few – comment by the association). It suggested that the newly founded association needed to be promoted more aggressively to its potential members. As a matter of fact, as early as January 30, 1977, the Vice-President of the Association, Sing-Lang Au suggested that “3 or 4 of the executive officers could tour the various major centers in Newfoundland. The executive officers would take with them a film presentation of the various activities that have already taken place. The essential aim of these visits is to get better acquainted with members of the Association and to establish closer communication” (Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1977a).

In 1978, a “Helping Hands” project was launched by the CANL. Kim Hong recalls that:

In the summer of 1978, Sing Lang Au, Jeannie Aue, Bernice Gin and I travelled across the island to meet Chinese in the communities outside of St. John’s. We first flew to Stephenville, and then rented a car to Corner Brook, and other communities in the west coast. After that we went to Grand Falls in central Newfoundland and Gander was our last stop. Then we took the flight back to St John’s four days after. The whole journey was tired and tight in schedule, but I think it was worthy because we got a chance to meet and talk to most Chinese families in Newfoundland and promote the association to them. (Kim Hong 2009)

Through initiatives such as the “Helping Hands” project, the newly founded Chinese Association made efforts to bring together an increasingly heterogeneous Chinese community in Newfoundland. They worked to maintain a sense of community among Chinese residents of the province by not just asserting a shared ethnicity but by reaching out and expressing concern for all Chinese Newfoundlanders. In order to effectively communicate with its members, the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador issued a quarterly newsletter beginning in 1981 (Kim Hong 2009). In the same year, the Chinese Memorial Monuments at Mount Pleasant Cemetery (see Figure 9) and Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery (see Figure 10) were erected, “In memory of those friends and relatives who have gone before.” Another memorial monument was erected at General Protestant Cemetery in 1986 (see Figure 11).



Figure 9: Chinese Memorial Monument at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John's.



Figure 10: Chinese Memorial Monument at Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery, St. John's.



Figure 11: Chinese Memorial Monument at General Protestant Cemetery, St. John's.

After the foundation of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, more social and cultural activities were regularly organized. Kim Hong says, “Throughout the year, we had our Chinese New Year’s party in around January or February, our Easter party in spring, our Flower Service in August, our Moon Festival in the Fall and our Christmas party in December. They were our regular gatherings. Sometimes we organized some special activities for adults and children. In the early years, in addition to Chinese language classes, we also offered English classes for those people who knew little English” (Kim Hong 2009). Except for some celebration of certain calendar holidays, many of these programs ceased in recent years. As Bill Ping observes, “There seems to be more activities in the old days, you know, like bowling, skating, going to gym and also Chinese classes that you can learn some Chinese. Don’t see too much going on in these days” (Bill Ping 2012).

The Decline of CANL’s Membership

In recent years, many people have noticed a dramatic drop of membership in the CANL. The decline can be attributed to many reasons. Kim Hong comments:

The association started to change in the last 10-15 years, say since late 1990s and early 2000 because Chinese population was declining. Over the years, the older Chinese started to fade out. Some passed away and some moved to the mainland to stay with their children. Therefore, the size of the association is shrinking instead of growing. Also, because of the economy of Newfoundland, we have also lost a lot of younger people who have gone to mainland for better occupational opportunities after graduation from high school or university. And, don’t forget, those younger people are the productive people, so you not only lose them but also their children. Who left behind are mostly older people or those who are not old enough to leave. The immigration is not enough to compensate the lost population. Give you an example, Mu, at the beginning, back in late 70s, we would have children’s Christmas party, which was usually held a week before Christmas time at the church’s lecture hall. Gee, the hall would be packed. Not just by children, but also parents and others. You were easily to get 110 to 120 children. But now, if you have a community Christmas party, you won’t get more than one or two dozens of kids. (Kim Hong 2009)

In 2012, sitting on the roadside at the Mount Pleasant Cemetery while we were waiting for the minister of the Gower Street United Church to officiate at the annual flower service, Kim Hong talked to me in an emotion-filled voice:

Years ago, when many people of the old generation were still alive, they always gathered at the cemetery here from places across the province and many of them might take a flight from mainland Canada or other countries. They came and saw relatives and friends who they might see only once a year. But now, you see, fewer and fewer people come or come at the same time. The old generation is gone. (Kim Hong 2012)

In addition to factors such as the loss of the old generation and the relocation of the younger generation of Chinese descent from Newfoundland to elsewhere, some members of CANL attribute the decline of membership to less participation of people from outside of St. John's area. Lili Wang, who was the president of CANL from 2003 to 2004, says, "In recent years, we lost contact with some of those Chinese who live outside of St. John's and rarely visit the city. A lot of people only pay their membership fees and register with us when they come to our functions, but a lot of them may be too busy to come and sometimes, weather is also a problem" (Lili Wang 2012). The experience of Jo-Jo Leung, a Memorial University music student of Chinese descent, confirms the observation of Lili Wang:

I was born in St. John's and grew up in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, which is 2-and-a-half-hour drive from St. John's. My dad was from Hong Kong and he is a medical doctor.My mom was originally from Taipei.....We don't really have too much connection with the Chinese community because in the past number of years, we lived far away which made us isolated. You are isolated from direct personal contact with, say, other Chinese people, and most of your social circle are people from the local community. The closet Chinese family is half hour drive from my hometown. (Jo-Jo Leung 2003)

Therefore, to some extent, the decline of the CANL membership is due to its inability to maintain effective connections with those Chinese families living in relatively small and more remote communities. Because of this, in recent years, some Chinese residing on the west coast of Newfoundland (mainly in the City of Corner Brook and the Town of Stephenville) planned to

organize a West Newfoundland Chinese Association to promote Chinese culture and provide services (Chinese language training) to the people of Chinese descent around the area including Corner Brook, Stephenville, Port-aux-Basques and St. Anthony (Lan Ma 2014).

As some other people point out, the decline of the Chinese Association is also linked to its inability to assist with the settlement and adjustment of Chinese Newcomers. Alick Tsui, who was the CANL president from 1997 to 1998, comments, “The membership of the association is declining because people find no help. You only join something when you find it helpful.”

(Alick Tsui 2012) Rennie So told me:

A few years ago, a very respectable Chinese old lady was sick, but for some reason, her children and relatives were unable to be with her. When the executive people in the Chinese Association were informed, nobody from the association went to the hospital to visit her. I became the only person who went to the hospital but I was there only on behalf of myself instead of the association. Two years ago, a Chinese student was hit by a car in downtown St. John's. Because there were some legal issues involved in this case, the student asked the association for help, but she got no response from them. (Rennie So 2009)

Jackie Tan comments, “In these days, the only time that the association might think about us is when they are looking for donations” (Jackie Tan 2014). May Soo describes an incident when the Chinese Association failed to intervene in support of their fellow members:

After the annual flower service in 1990, out of town family members joined their local Chinese friends at the popular Jade Gardens on Kenmount Road for an evening of mahjong and other games. The police raided the premises and charged the restaurant for illegal gambling. This devastated the Chinese community, for there still remained a picture in local Newfoundlanders' minds of the Chinese as addicted gamblers. The news was sensationalized, plastered all over the media. Business declined so drastically that the restaurant had to close its doors. Even months later, under new management as the Taiwan Restaurant, some patrons would still quip “where are your gambling rooms?” and “would we be arrested if we ate here?” No one from the Chinese Association (CANL) emerged to offer support for their own. Even some non-Chinese who were friends of the Chinese came out and voiced their support. (May Soo 2013)

Regarding the functions of the Chinese association in general, Chien Ming Yeh, a Taiwan native and the owner of the Formosa Tea House in St. John's, comments:

I don't really want to get involved into those meaningless activities. One time when I was still in P.E.I. [Prince Edward Island, an Atlantic province of Canada], I went to a Chinese New Year's party organized by local Chinese association because I wanted to support them. When I was there, I saw people playing mah-jong. There were some buffet tables over there so that people all helped themselves. There was no performance and people didn't even talk to you. It was so boring, so I told the host not to invite me anymore. In my opinion, I think a Chinese Association should have its own responsibilities. At least two, one is providing social support and the other is educational promotion. Regarding the first function, we have to ask: when Chinese first come to Newfoundland, does the association help them to settle down? Does the association really help those long-established Chinese families? As far as I know, in many cases, the association is helpless to Chinese students and Chinese residents. In terms of the second function, I think a good Chinese association should support and promote Chinese business. For example, the association should encourage those Chinese restaurants which serve more authentic and traditional dishes and give them certificates or champion cups to recognize them. I think the quality of food should be much better under the competition and encouragement. When customers see the certificates and champion cups, they know those restaurants are better. That is an effective way of cultural promotion. Now, because the association does not fulfill its functions, fewer and fewer people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland want to join the association. (Chien Ming Yeh 2013)

Some CANL members deny the above critiques. Lili Wang replies, "When I was an executive member of the Chinese Association, Jim Mah was the president. One of his main presidential works was writing supporting letters for new Chinese immigrants. I was told that potential immigrants who held a letter from the association would get additional credits for their applications. When Jim left Newfoundland in early 2000s and I took over the leadership, I continued helping prospective immigrants. However, in recent years, we don't really receive any this kind of requests, so I guess that people don't really need us" (Lili Wang 2012). Lily Wang's defense somewhat indicates that the Chinese Association not only lost contact with Chinese residing in rural and/or remote Newfoundland communities, it has also failed to attract newcomers. My fieldwork suggests a second, more fundamental, reason for the organization's decline is the intra-group diversity of the current Chinese community in Newfoundland. The increasing diversity has not been accommodated under the CANL umbrella.

The Intra-group Diversity of Current Chinese Community in Newfoundland

Regional Difference

As I mentioned earlier, the foundation of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador was meant to accommodate the intra-group diversity of Chinese in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Chan Chau Tam recalls:

In the past, all Chinese people spoke Toisanese, a Cantonese dialect, because a majority of members of the association were from Toisan or Hoi Ping. These two places have the same language. When I came in 1972, I had to talk to them in Toisanese, instead of my mother tongue, the Hong Kong-style Cantonese. If I didn't speak in Toisanese, those old Chinese would say, "Why don't you use our language?" When more people from Hong Kong came to Newfoundland, people in the association started to use more Cantonese. (Chan Chau Tam 2012)

Tam's comment indicates that, in the 1970s, there were two major Chinese sub-groups: Chinese "old timers" and their descendants, and Hong Kong newcomers. Some people like E.T. Tjan, who did not speak any Cantonese dialects, were forced to learn the common language (E.T. Tjan 2012). In the margin of the two groups, the Taiwanese Chinese (Mandarin/Hokkien speakers) also represented another, but smaller, group. Chan Chau Tam continues:

People from Taiwan also joined the association, but they didn't actively participate into our activities because they had their own group. Sometimes, some of them didn't identify themselves as Chinese because of political reasons. Even if they came to our functions, they were still different from us in terms of sense of belonging. On the contrary, Chinese from Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries were closer to us and most of them were proud to be Chinese. I think that was because they had the same colonial experience like us who were from Hong Kong. (Tan Chan Chau 2012)

In early 1980s, people of Taiwanese origin formed their own Taiwanese Fellowship (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Although this was not a sub-division of the Chinese Association, but an independent organization, the memberships of these two organizations overlapped (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012).

When Chinese from mainland China (PRC) started to come to Newfoundland in 1980s, a majority of them joined the Chinese Association. E.T. Tjan recalls, “In the early 1980s, we knew all people from mainland China and they all joined the Chinese Association. They were lonely and suffering from homesickness. Because their English skills were not that good, they didn’t have many local friends so they were delighted to come to us” (E.T. Tjan 2012). However, nowadays, CANL seems to be less attractive to immigrants from mainland Chinese who currently represent the majority of Chinese newcomers to Newfoundland. To date, Lili Wang is the only Past President of CANL to have come from mainland China and her family, along with Yagang Xie’s (Xie is a medical professor working at the Faculty of Medicine of Memorial University) family, are the most active mainland Chinese families in the association. Lili Wang explains why PRC Chinese retreat from the Chinese Association:

It is because, in the years when we grew up, we were not educated about the idea of community. Instead, we had experienced so many political movements in China and sometimes we were confused of the differences between community activities and political activities in the community. The unsatisfactory experience in political movements prevents many people from mainland China from joining any community activities. They unconsciously try to protect themselves and their families from being hurt. (Lili Wang 2012)

In addition to political reasons, some other people attribute the reason of less involvement of mainland Chinese in CANL to the cultural differences between mainland Chinese and other Chinese groups. Zachery Pan, a dentist whose clinic is located at 1 Paton Street in St. John’s, notes:

We used to go to the Chinese New Year shows on campus and we also went to the parties organized by the Chinese Association. The Chinese Association is actually the association of Hong Kong Chinese because they don’t or they can’t really absorb Chinese from mainland China. Sometimes I feel Hong Kong people don’t really consider themselves as Chinese. There is a big cultural gap between us. We are also very different from Taiwanese people. We could not understand the jokes told by each other, although we use the same language. (Zachery Pan 2012)

The “cultural differences” separating various Chinese subgroups meant that some people from mainland China found it difficult to make Chinese friends in Newfoundland in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Wendy Long comments:

It was very difficult to make friends here. Sometimes it was easier to make friends with local people than with Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan. I think that might be because of my own experience. I was born and grew up in the neighborhood of a musical school. Before I came to Canada and Newfoundland, I had a lot of artist friends who I could discuss literature, music and others in arts with. But when I got here, I found that I could not continue my former life in Newfoundland. I felt so lonely. I meant culturally. It was hard to get a friend who truly understood you. There were a lot of cultural differences, even between Chinese. (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012)

In the late 1980s, with the help of the PRC Embassy for Canada, the mainland Chinese-based Chinese Students and Scholars Association replaced the former Chinese Student Society formed by Daniel Wong and other Hong Kong students in 1970 (Daniel Wong 2013). At present, except if specifically invited to perform at an event, few students (mainly from mainland China) get involved in the activities organized by CANL.

The above discussion suggests that, although the local Chinese population is small, people are diverse in various aspects with different interests. It shows that cultural differences among Chinese with different linguistic and regional or national backgrounds have meant that Chinese subgroups have engaged in a debate over “who is Chinese?” and “what is Chineseness?” The above overview suggests that Toisan Chinese old timers, Hong Kong Chinese and Chinese from mainland China all self-identify as Chinese, although Chinese of Taiwanese origin would claim their unique Taiwanese identity. Each group declares their cultural expressions of Chineseness more “authentic” and “traditional” than the others.

Differences of Personal Response to the Chinese Head Tax Redress

Intra-group differences were also reflected in the foundation of the Newfoundland and Labrador Head Tax Redress Organization (NLHTRO) (which was proposed by Peter Hing). The pursuit of justice regarding the Chinese head tax was launched by William Ping, as the *Evening Telegram* reported:

William Ping is still hoping to get back \$300 which he had to pay the Newfoundland government to enter the country in 1931. Last year, Ping ahead St. John's East MP Jim McGrain to help him with his claim. He was not heard back from the MP, he said Wednesday, and now he plans to get in touch with St. John's West MP John Crosbie, who is also Canada's justice minister. Ping is not asking for a refund for the sake of the money. He is doing it for all the Chinese people who had to pay the "Head tax" to enter the Dominion of Newfoundland. (*Evening Telegram*, January 25, 1985)

Until Ping's sudden death in 1999, "The only thing he felt Canada had let him down on was the head tax" (Sullivan 2006, 141).

On April 15, 2006, following the federal government's Throne Speech on April 4, the Newfoundland and Labrador Head Tax Redress Committee (NLHTRC) was formed under the auspices of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. Gordon Jin, a descendant of a head tax payer, was elected as the president. On April 19, the committee along with the executives of the Chinese Association and some Head Tax payers' descendants participated into an Atlantic Provinces consultation process with the Government of Canada via teleconference. In the late April, a meeting between the local Chinese community (the president of Chinese Association Betty Wong and the Co-Chair of the NLHTRC Rebecca Law as representatives) and the Newfoundland Government (Hon. Paul Shelley, Minister of Human Resource, Employment and Labour) initiated the dialogue between NLHTRC and the Provincial Government of NL. On May 10, 2006, the NLHTRC launched the commemoration to the 100th Anniversary of the Newfoundland Chinese Head Tax, which attracted the attention of both local (e.g. *Evening*

Telegram and CBC Radio NL Division) and national media. The news has been profiled on the Toronto-based Fairchild Chinese TV and in the pages of the leading Chinese Newspaper published in Canada, *Ming Pao*.

On June 22, 2006, on behalf of the Government of Canada, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for the unjust head tax on Chinese immigrants in the past and promised funds for related cultural projects and symbolic compensation to those head taxpayers who or whose spouses were still alive. Following the steps of the federal government, on June 28, 2006, Premier Danny Williams also presented an apology for Newfoundland Chinese Head Tax (1906-1949) on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When Robert Hong, whose father paid a \$300 head tax in 1931, heard of this official apology from the federal government, he said, “I think this is momentous..... I’m doubly proud to be both a Canadian and a Newfoundlander. I’m simply moved to tears tinged with sadness, of course, because Dad is not here” (*CBC Newfoundland and Labrador*, June 23, 2006). To descendants of Chinese Head Taxpayers like Gordon Jin and Bill Ping, the apologies were just a good start to right a historical wrong. More steps, like financial redress and funds for cultural projects on Chinese Head Tax, were also anticipated in the future. However, their anticipation was regarded as a personal affair rather than an issue of community interest, so it did not get advocacy from the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (Betty Wong 2010 and Alick Tsui 2012). Many recent immigrants are not aware of the existence of the Chinese Head Tax and very few of them consider it relevant to their own immigration experience. The divergent reactions to the apology promoted those Chinese descendants, their families and supporters (mainly people originally from Hoi Ping and Toisan and their descendants) to form the Newfoundland and Labrador Head Tax Redress Organization in 2007 (Peter Hing 2014).

The main mission of the organization is to promote an awareness of the Newfoundland Chinese head tax and its impact on the Chinese community as well as the contributions of the Chinese pioneers to the Dominion of Newfoundland (and later the province of Newfoundland and Labrador). Projects were planned to reach these goals: a monument in memory of the Chinese pioneers, an exhibit on their life and stories, a digital exhibit / website and an educational resource kit to be distributed to the public-school boards in Newfoundland and Labrador. All these projects are funded through the Community Historical Recognition Program (CHRP) of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Gordon Jin 2009 and Peter Hing 2014). The CHRP was a five-year program established in 2008 to acknowledge and educate Canadians about “the historical experiences of ethno-cultural communities affected by wartime discriminatory measures and immigration restrictions applied in Canada.”¹⁸ \$13.5 million has been made available to support 68 community projects and NLHTRC’s project entitled “Newfoundland Head Tax and the Chinese Community” is one of those to promote “a lasting awareness of the communities’ experience.”

With the financial support of CHRP, on September 17th, 2010 at 1pm, a permanent monument commemorating the pioneers of the Chinese Community in Newfoundland and Labrador was unveiled in St. John’s at the City Hall Annex Park of New Gower Street (at the site of the first Chinese laundry in Newfoundland -1895) (See Figure 12 and 13). At the scene, Bill Ping, son of William Ping told me, “I wish Dad could have been here to see this, he would have been a proud man for sure. I was thinking of him all the day.” On March 2, 2012, an exhibit entitled as “Taking Root: Chinese Immigrants and Their Families in Newfoundland, 1895-1970s - Work, Family and Community” was launched at the Center for Newfoundland Studies in the Queen Elizabeth II Library of Memorial University. A curricular project - the distribution of an

¹⁸ Quoted in the official website of CHRP, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/programs/community.asp>.

educational resource kit to the public school boards in Newfoundland and Labrador was also launched. All these either completed or on-going projects receive little assistance from the CANL and mainly rely on the efforts of individual descendants of head tax payers and their friends and supporters, who present a different idea from the majority CANL members who came to Newfoundland after 1967 as professionals having not experienced any institutional discrimination, on how to look at and deal with the community's past.



Figure 12: Chinese Head Tax Monument, St. John's.



Figure 13: Members of NLHTRC in front of the Chinese Head Tax Monument on September 17, 2010 (from left to right: Bill Ping, Gilbert Wong, Frank Au, Will Gin, Peter Hing, Gordon Jin, Rebecca Law, Robert Hong and Miriam Wright).

Socioeconomic Difference

In addition to the regional difference mentioned above, socioeconomic class also contributes to Chinese intra-group diversity. When being asked why he seldom participates into the activities organized by CANL, Joseph Mo explains:

I rarely participate into the activities of the association because, first, I don't have time. I have to work long hours every day. Secondly, it is more important. I don't go to the functions because nobody asks me to go. Most people I know are those who are working in the restaurant business like me. But even those restaurant people are divided into various subgroups. There are those early Toisan chefs, Cantonese chefs and chefs from northern parts of China. They all have their own groups. As I said, nobody asks me to go because of my socioeconomic class. I am only a chef and I don't have my own restaurant. I am not that kind of people who they want to invite. One day, if I become a boss, I may be more welcome. (Joseph Mo 2013)

According to Mo, people who self-identify as belonging to a lower socioeconomic class often avoid taking part in Chinese cultural activities because they are struggling to survive. Second, they believe that their presence or absence at the cultural functions is not paid attention to and their voice will be hardly heard or taken seriously by others who are typically more powerful in the dialogue. That said, these people remain confident in their identity as Chinese. Mo says, “I don’t think that my identity as Chinese needs to be further discussed” (Joseph Mo 2013).

Religious Difference

Beyond the system of mainstream churches and without the direct support of the established Chinese community in Newfoundland (CANL), an independent Chinese church emerged in late 1970s to serve Chinese Christian group in St. John’s. Most attendees of the Chinese church were and still are newly arrived professionals and students. According to Mr. Kei Szeto, the historical roots of the St. John's Chinese Christian Church can be traced back to 1976. That year, some students and professors, who were mainly from Hong Kong or Taiwan, started a “Prayer and Bible-study” group at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Szeto, Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1995, 55). In around 1977 and 1978, when more Chinese students (mainly from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Southeast Asian countries) of Christian background came to Newfoundland to pursue advanced studies, a Chinese Christian Fellowship group (CCF) was formed. The CCF group not only provided an opportunity for Chinese Christians to communicate with each other, but also served as a centre for overseas Chinese students to meet others with the same cultural background in St. John's. When many Vietnamese refugees came to the city in around 1979, CCF also offered a lot of assistance to help the members of the Chinese Vietnamese community through regular Saturday visitations by CCF members.

By 1980, the CCF had approximately 15 regular attendees. This group, as an ethnic communicative network, also attracted more non-Christian Chinese students and eventually many students converted to Christianity. For example, in the winter of 1981, nine people became Christian. Encouraged by preacher Dr. Henry Lau and because of the increasing number of Chinese Christians, in 1982, the St. John's Chinese Christian Church (SJCCC) formally came into existence with twenty-strong members (*St. John's Chinese Christian Church* 1997, 1). The first Sunday worship was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. C. C. Hsiung, who were two of the founders of SJCCC. In February 1982, the worship service was relocated to the Faith Bible Chapel on Kenmount Road (*St. John's Chinese Christian Church* 1997, 1). Due to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of attendees, Cantonese, Mandarin, and English were the major languages mutually used in the services.

At the same time of the thriving of SJCCC, as one of the most important undertakings during the early days of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Chinese ministry at the Gower Street United Church was established. According to Kim Hong, upon the request of some Christian members of the Chinese community such as William Ping, with the support of the administrative committee of the Gower Street United Church, in 1984, United Church of Canada administrators in Toronto began considering the establishment of a Chinese United Church mission in St. John's (Kim Hong 2009). In 1985, Rev. David T. Y. Wen, the Chairman of the National Ethnic Committee of the United Church of Canada visited St. John's several times to research the feasibility of establishment of a Chinese ministry. In his report, he recognized, "there is a distinct possibility of establishing a Chinese mission in St. John's...there is a definite need to extend Christian concern and service to the people of Chinese origin in St. John's and other areas of Newfoundland. The United Church of Canada can fulfil the spiritual,

social and emotional needs of these people ...” (Wen 1985, 2). When the proposal for a Chinese mission project was approved, a Chinese Advisory Committee was formed. In addition to the then ministers of Gower Street United Church Rev. Bruce Gregerson and Rev. Levi Mehaney, active members of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador joined the committee.¹⁹

On June 18, 1986, Rev. Kim Wong from Moose Jaw was appointed to be the minister of the Chinese Outreach Project of the Gower Street United Church. This appointment made him the first Chinese minister and the mission was the only ethnic ministry of the United Church of Canada east of Montreal. According to the *Contract of Employment Minister: Outreach Ministry to the Chinese Community* (May 1986), Rev. Kim Wong was appointed as the Associate Minister of the Gower Street United Church under the supervision of both the church and the Advisory Committee. His duties included:

- To visit generally throughout the Chinese community and provide pastoral care, counselling, and support on a non-denominational basis to all people of Chinese origin.
- To represent the caring concern of the Church for people of Chinese origin through such activities as:
 - Advocacy and support on behalf of individuals who need assistance relating to governmental agencies and organizations;
 - Friendly visitation in homes and hospitals;
 - Counselling to individuals and families in need;
 - Programming of activities for a variety of ages and interests

The social justice and community outreach emphasis reflected in these responsibilities was echoed by Rev. Wen in his report to the United Church of Canada: “Their attitude toward the minister: most of the people whom I visited think of the minister as a social worker” (Wen 1985, 12). In this sense, the goals of the Chinese ministry were not only denominational but touched

¹⁹ They were: Daniel Wong, Kim Hong, William Ping, Raymond Li, Sing Lang Au, Jeannie Au, Sylvia Kwan, Ted Hong, Chan Chau Tam, Hoover Tom, Haemme Tom Chow, Janet Au, Wayne Hong, Billy Hong, Miriam Yu, Julius Yan, and Shin Jia Hwang in St. John's, Tom Chow in Grand Falls and Henry Wong in Marystown.

every aspect of the daily life of the city's Chinese residents: "These services will be offered to members of the community regardless of church affiliation or belief with the understanding that they will be Christian services of worship" (*Contract of Employment Minister: Outreach Ministry to the Chinese Community* 1986).

During his mission in St. John's, Rev. Wong paid particular attention to older people, those with illnesses, and any isolated Chinese families living in remote areas of Newfoundland. In an interview with the *Evening Telegram*, Rev. Kim Wong commented, "I have a major concern for the older people, who have no one to look to for service and in particular new arrivals in the community who have no activities to go to or friends, and many have difficulties with translations" (*Evening Telegram* October 4, 1984). Rev. Wen also noted a range of responses to the Chinese ministry mission: "I found that many of the people who are supportive of our project are in the take-out and restaurant business.....[But] the professionals who have immigrated to Newfoundland and many local-born Chinese prefer to pursue other interests" (Wen 1985, 12).

Kim Hong remembers, "I actually informed the various admitting departments of the hospitals in the city and asked people to let Rev. Wong know when a person of Chinese decent is being admitted to hospital for investigations and treatments" (Kim Hong 2009). Kim Hong adds, "The whole project was a provincial one because it was not only for the Chinese in St. John's, but also the whole Chinese population province-wide. So the minister had to go to weddings, funerals, or other activities in small communities outside of St. John's although it did not work out very well." (Kim Hong 2009) In Rev. Wong's Chinese Ministry Report in 1987 for the Gower Street United Church, he mentioned that, "I feel that the Chinese community is excited in having their own minister. On June 8-12 1987, Mr. William Ping and I visited across the province. We were welcome in every city and town. Our folks supplied us with room and board

during our visitation. After the visitation I received a letter from Corner Brook asking if we could visit them periodically” (Gower Street United Church Annual Report 1987). In 1988, the annual visit across the Island took place from June 20 to June 24. Rev. Wong recalled, “We travelled a total of 2,500 km. We were welcomed by every family and invited to stay at their homes overnight. There was not enough time to stay in every town overnight. During our visits, families told us of their difficulties and sufferings. This was a very emotional time for them because they do not often have someone to talk and share with and so we listened and gave them encouragement and comfort” (Gower Street United Church Annual Report 1988).



Figure 14: The Visit of a Missionary Group from Toronto in 1989. Courtesy of Chan Chau Tam

However, little evidence suggests the connection between the Christian group of university students and professors and the community-based mission. I would suggest that the disconnection may be attributed to the religious ambivalence of Chinese old timers, who constituted of the majority of the Chinese congregation at Gower Street United Church (see

Figure 14). Daniel Wong also recalls, “Most of participants were restaurant people and some other families of professionals like Kim Hong’s and mine” (Daniel Wong 2013). “Religious ambivalence,” is what R. Stephen Warner defines as “something that defies the very foundation of rationality, because it means that people want and do not want the same thing, or more typically, both hate and love the same object” (Warner 2004, 112). In public many Chinese may have self-identified as Christian but in private they may have enacted traditional Chinese beliefs brought with them from China. Alison Marshall’s exploration of the Chinese community in Western Manitoba provides a thoughtful discussion on this “religious ambivalence”:

People undoubtedly understood that Canada was a Christian nation, and self-identifying in this way thereby demonstrated that you were not that different and that you wanted to belong. Being seen as Christian in public also engendered respect because on some level many non-Chinese knew the answer was given to avoid an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation for the person asking. The response was therefore quite generous, compassionate, and at the same time sincere. (Marshall 2009, 9)

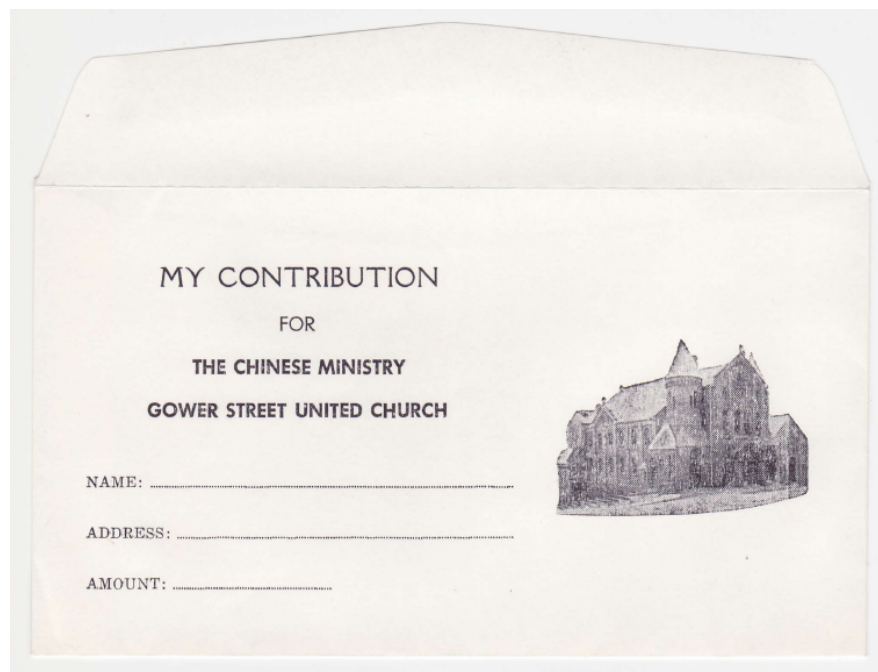


Figure 15: Offering Envelop for the Chinese Ministry. Courtesy of Gower Street United Church, St. John's.

In my understanding, most Chinese old timers' attendance to church was driven more by social needs, such as the need for assistance, recognition, and acceptance, rather than their spiritual conversion to Christianity. When social needs were met, or when fewer members of the Chinese community needed to turn to the mission to fulfill their goals of social acceptance, their support to the outreach project became a burden which they would eventually get rid of. In 1989, the ethnic outreach project was terminated due to insufficient financial support from the United Church of Canada and the local Chinese congregation. Chan Chau Tam recalls, "When Rev. Kim Wong was here, every family like us who went to the church would offer 300 dollars per month. It was quite a big expense at the time" (Chan Chau Tam 2012) (see Figure 15). Daniel Wong also mentions, "The number of families who regularly attended the service was around 30 to 40, but it was not enough to support an independent missionary. Therefore, when the funding from the United Church was terminated, the Chinese missionary project was subsequently terminated" (Daniel Wong 2013). In this sense, unlike most of those Chinese Christians of SJCCC, many Chinese old timers who self-define as practicing Christians had little religious attachment to Christianity.

In April 1990, a property at 30 - 32 Newtown Road, in the vicinity of MUN, was purchased as a church building. Renovation was completed in February 1992. Over the years, membership in the SJCCC has fluctuated with changes in the Chinese student population. In recent years, more students and professionals from Mainland China have been involved in many activities of the Chinese Christian Church and this has expanded the role of the church from a place not only for spiritual purity, but also as a social shelter for those people who need help and as a place to interact with other co-ethnics.

I started to attend the St. John's Chinese Christian Church on Sunday, April 19, 2009. While I was waiting for a friend of mine who is a regular member of the church willing to introduce me to members of the congregation, I was approached by the two elders of the church. Elder Siu and Elder Qiu welcomed me enthusiastically. The progression of the service was similar to those of other churches and included hymn singing, praying, offering, a sermon and so forth. The whole service employed three languages – English, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese. The last part of the service, which I did not expect, is reserved for newcomers to introduce themselves to the congregation. I briefly introduced myself and after the service many people came over to talk to me and I was invited to a lunch served in the downstairs of the building. When I walked down, I found many children of Chinese descent (some of them have mixed background) who attended the Sunday school of the church, playing together. During the lunch, I chatted with my neighbors and those who were interested in my background as Hakka and my studies in folklore. The meal was simple but the communication in the room was warm. The Sunday service began at 10:30 and finished at around 12:00 pm, but significantly, the lunch took longer, running from 12:15 to around 2:00 or 2:30.

Before I left, I was invited to attend Bible study. The Chinese church offered three Bible study classes: English Bible study (it has since been suspended due to the resignation of Elder Siu), Mandarin Bible study on Friday nights²⁰ and Cantonese Bible study on Sunday afternoons. Each Bible study session lasts about an hour and afterwards the leaders provide refreshments for the attendees. During the social time, people might exchange information about the Chinese community, the city and other topics. In addition to these regular gatherings, I also attended many special events organized by the church, such as a Chinese New Year celebration,

²⁰ Since February 2014, the previous Mandarin bible study has been divided into three sub groups: Mandarin fellowship, student fellowship and graduate fellowship (for those who have graduated from university and are working).

Christmas parties, a summer camping trip, and a wedding. Many active members of the church have told me that they spend many weeknights and often almost the entire weekend with other members of the congregation at either church-organized or private events. Yuming Zhao, a chemistry professor at Memorial University and an active member of the Chinese church, says, “I spent almost all my free time after work in the church. In addition to attending regular Sunday service and various bible study groups on Fridays and Sundays, I also take care of the routine maintenance of the church properties and some other things like financial affairs and renovation. I don’t really have too much time left after all these church-related services” (Yuming Zhao 2012).

Regular participation in church activities leads to the establishment of close relationships and helps maintain co-ethnic networks. However, some researchers argue that, in a multicultural society, intensive interaction within one’s own ethnic group might prevent ethnic members from socially integrating into the wider community (Drake and Crayton 1962). These scholars caution that extensive investment in retaining ethnic social networks and emphasis on ethnic cultural and value preservation can limit ethnic members’ exploration of new social settings and their contacts with the wider society (Fong and Lee 2006, Nagata 2003, Yang 1999).

Based on my participant-observation of the Chinese church in St. John’s, I would argue that at least in the context of St. John’s, the fear of individuals relying on the Chinese church to maintain ethnic networks, culture and language, let alone, as Nagata says, to resist assimilation into the mainstream society (Nagata 2003, 7), is overstated. Almost all attendees of the St. John’s Chinese Christian Church are professionals or students. Due to the small number of Chinese residents living in this province, most spend the majority of their daily lives “forced” to integrate into the dominant society. Many children of these professionals speak only English at school and

at home they often prefer to use a creolized language which incorporates a smattering of Chinese into majority English. As a result, church activities, including informal social gatherings such as family parties, are the only opportunities for some individuals to use their native languages and for members of the younger generation to practice their parents' mother tongue. Therefore, I would disagree with the argument that frequent participation in an ethnic church represents a refusal to socially assimilate.

Michael Lau is a senior researcher of National Research Council who had been attending the Chinese church since 1984 but left a few years ago. He observes, "In recent years, more students and professionals from mainland China have been involved in church activities and the role of the church has expanded to be a social shelter for people who need help and a platform for the interaction between Chinese" (Michael Lau 2009). In this sense, the St. John's Chinese Christian Church actually becomes an ethnic enclave especially after the English speaking elder and his group left in January 2012 because of their different opinions about the language use in the church and "conflicting" understandings regarding some church affairs (Katherine Huang 2012, Chan Chau Tam 2012 and Yuming Zhao 2012).

In the church, Chineseness, along with faith in God is emphasized in all activities. Yuming Zhao also says, "We know that many people come to church for social purposes. We understand that. Also, we also understand that, as Chinese, we all want to celebrate our traditional holidays, which are very important for us. In the church, we always follow the Chinese calendar traditions" (Yuming Zhao 2012). However, because of their denominational affiliation, attendees of the church, especially those regulars, have little social interaction with other Chinese groups or individuals. Heather Peng, a professor working at the Faculty of Engineering, Memorial University and active member of the St. John's Chinese Christian Church, comments on the

relationship between the church group and CANL as follows, “We don’t go to any activities of the local Chinese association because we are Christian. We would like to communicate more with God, our brothers and sisters in the church and those who come to us for God’s gospel” (Heather Peng 2009).

Generational Difference

As exemplified in the previous discussion, the Chinese in Newfoundland are different from each other in terms of language, region of origin, socioeconomic class and religion. However, Chinese immigrants, also known as first generation Chinese, all claim their identity as Chinese, at least culturally. E. T. Tjan claims, “No matter where you are from, Taiwan, mainland China, Hong Kong, even like myself from Indonesia, we are all Chinese” (E.T. Tjan 2012). Chan Chau Tam comments, “Some Taiwanese say that they are not Chinese, and they prefer not to speak Mandarin in Taiwan. But the so-called Taiwanese that they speak, is a Chinese dialect used in the southern part of Fujian Province in mainland China. Taiwanese are obviously Chinese” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). As a matter of fact, a majority of Taiwanese in Newfoundland do not deny their cultural identity as Chinese. Even those who are from relatively conservative parts of Taiwan, such as Shinn Jia Hwang, Katherine Huang and Chien Ming Yeh, would agree with that.

For the descendants of Chinese immigrants, identity issues become more complicated. In the cases of individuals in second or later generations of Chinese descent, Chineseness is not a “default” but negotiable and optional. Kim Hong says, “We have the locally born Chinese. They are slightly different in attitude and outlooks to Chinese culture from us and some of their peers. In general, the younger generation tends to be more westernized” (Kim Hong 2009).

Some people of Chinese descent deny their Chinese identity. Alick Tsui tells me, “I happen to know of a person whose last name is O’Gay. His granddaughter told me that he was a Chinese who actually changed his surname and Irishize it to fit into local community” (Alick Tsui 2012). According to Tsui, who had some conversations with Mr. O’Gay’s granddaughter, Gail Sharpe from Clarenville, Newfoundland, she said, some Chinese in Newfoundland voluntarily changed their names to “conceal” their ethnicity in order to avoid social harassment and other potential troubles and make them and their family more accepted by locals, many of whom descended from Irish immigrants (Alich Tsui 2012).

On the contrary, some people who were also born to intermarried families, such as Bill Ping and Melvin Hong (a retired school principal and son of Charlie Hong and Fronie Matthews as mentioned earlier) claim their identity as Chinese, but their children, whose mothers are Caucasian Newfoundlanders, may prefer to identify themselves as people of mixed background. Bill Ping notes, “So now, I am second generation. I still consider myself Chinese because of my connection with dad. My dad was Chinese. Then the third generation, William, so what does he fit in? Does he think like ‘my dad is a Chinese, but not really, he is half Chinese, then makes me quarter Chinese?’ Then comes his kids, and I don’t think they will associate to any Chinese but the name” (Bill Ping 2012). When I asked William, Bill Ping’s son, what he thinks about his ethnicity, he self-identifies: “I have mixed background and I can’t just say I am a Chinese or English or something else” (Violet Ryan-Ping and Ryan and William Ping Jr. 2011). Sometimes, when William Ping Jr. and his mother Violet Ryan-Ping went to activities hosted by the Chinese Association, they felt left out. Ryan-Ping observes, “Say years ago, there was a gap between Chinese and [British or Irish] Newfoundland people. When we went to the association’s Christmas Party, not many people would speak to us. I didn’t know them and they didn’t know

me. But Will, he is the only one who still has association with Mr. William Ping. He was always asked if he has any relation to Mr. Ping. But all his cousins lost this heritage” (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011).

Younger people who were not born in Newfoundland or those who were born to both Chinese parents seem to have less difficulty accepting their identity as Chinese and some of them actually are proud of their heritage. Chin Tan says, “My son and my family are extremely proud of our culture.....I always tell my children, if you don’t know you are Chinese, you will get lost. Don’t pretend not to be Chinese. ‘Who you are’ is very important..... My daughter told me a story that when she went shopping in Shanghai, she was bargaining with the sales person and she told the latter in Chinese with her strong Canadian accent: ‘I am a Chinese’” (Chin Tan 2012). When I asked Tzu-Hao Hsu “do you still identify yourself as Chinese?” she responded, “It is not something I can drop or leave behind. I still speak the language, and there are certain values and customs that distinguish me not Canadian. So it is not that I can just say I am living in Canada now and Chineseness is no longer part of myself” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012).

However, a majority of local-born or–raised Chinese actually have their own version of being Chinese in Newfoundland. Chan Chau Tam comments:

All my children know that they are Chinese because it is something that you can’t change. But, they are so different from us. For example, we still care about what is happening in China, but they don’t. At most, they may say “too bad” when we tell them that there are some tragedies in China. They don’t really have any attachment to our homeland. When they were younger, they went back to Hong Kong with us, but when they grew up, they said they would never want to go back again. (Chan Chau Tam 2012)

Lili Wang reiterates, “My kids actually have little knowledge about China although they travelled with us back and forth between China and Canada. They are so attached to Canada” (Lili Wang 2012). Wallace Hong tells me, “My son always told me that ‘I am a CBC [Canadian Born Chinese].’ He went to school here and learned Canadian history and geography. They don’t

really have any attachment to China. They know who they are but they are not interested in Chinese culture and tradition. He said ‘I knew nothing about China and the culture.’ They are more like Canadian than Chinese. Now, my daughter-in-law is a Newfoundland girl” (Wallace Hong 2013). Leon Chung, a self-employed artist and son of the current owner of China House restaurant, remarks, “I was always called “jook sing” (Hollow bamboo) by Chinese people like my father. It was just a Chinese slang of saying someone is a white washed Chinese who is not familiar with his own culture. Mainly used for Asians who are born here who don't know squat about their culture. I mean I am pretty white washed” (Leon Chung 2013). In some cases, these local-born or–raised children do not understand some common Chinese manners. Lili Wang notes:

Some of the local Chinese children feel some Chinese ways of doing things strange. I remember that: one day, my daughter called me and told me that they had a party at her workplace. In this party, she met a Chinese but she didn’t pay too much attention to that person. Then she found that the person approached her right away when he saw her. She assumed that he was from mainland China because of his strong accent. She was born here, so she didn’t have that kind of feeling like us. For us, if we meet some people from China, we will automatically feel that we are emotionally close to that person. But she didn’t and she treated him as she treated other people. However, the Chinese guy felt so excited to see an oriental-looking person there, so he requested to exchange email address with her. She said she felt so strange to see a person who just met you and asked for your contact information. I told her that was what people in China would do. But she still felt uncomfortable. (Lili Wang 2012)

For many of these second or later generation Chinese, being Chinese is more racial than cultural even if both of their parents are Chinese.

Many people explain the lack of attachment Canadian-born Chinese individuals feel towards their ancestral culture as a result of the small Chinese population in Newfoundland. Lili Wang notes:

The Chinese population is too small here. When my son went to school in Logy Bay [a small community close to St. John’s], he was the only non-white from kindergarten to elementary school, but he didn’t know he was a non-white because his classmates

actually didn't treat him differently. Actually they looked at him the same as them. So when he was younger, we were joking on him and asked him to get a Chinese girlfriend, his answer was really strange to me. He said, "What is the difference?" It seemed that he had no idea about the difference between Chinese and locals because of the social environment around us. When he went to Junior High, there were three Chinese in the whole school but not at the same grade level. In high school, there were also only three Chinese in the same school. In this sense, Newfoundland is so different from other places in Canada like Vancouver. There can be at least several Chinese (or Asian) in one class. I remember when we accompanied my son to attend university in Montreal, we met a friend's daughter who was from Vancouver and was also attending McGill University. At a dinner with her, the girl told us that, in her class in Vancouver, 80% students were Chinese. People there are so easily aware of their ethnicity. But, in Newfoundland, it is really hard for a Chinese kid to understand and learn his/her own cultural roots. In many cases, when we talk to them in Chinese, they will definitely reply in English. (Lili Wang 2012)

Chin Tan has a similar story to Wang's: "When my son was four years old, one day, he told his mother, 'Mom, we have a Chinese in my class.' My wife asked him, 'Aren't you a Chinese?' He looked at himself and was so confused. He actually didn't realize he was also a Chinese. Years later, a girl from the west coast of Newfoundland told my son that he was the first Chinese that she had ever met in her life" (Chin Tan 2012).

Family education plays an important role in constructing children's perceptions on their identity. In the following discussion, I would like to take Chinese language education in Newfoundland as an example to look at how identity is shaped in the domestic domain. The reason I chose language education is because my fieldwork suggests that many people consider Chinese language skills as the most important measurement to look at "how Chinese you are." For example, Lili Wang says: "I think that a native-English speaker in Newfoundland would feel so weird if he/she knows that you are a Chinese but can't speak the language. I think the language is important" (Lili Wang 2012). Hang Mei Tam, the manager of Magic Wok Eatery, always reminds her nephew Mark Chan, a university student at Memorial that, "It is a shame if you are a Chinese but couldn't speak any Chinese" (Hang Mei Tam 2012).

Among the younger generation of Chinese descent, a majority cannot speak Chinese with fluency. Some of them grew up in intermarriage families like Melvin Hong, Bill Ping, Linda Fong and her siblings, Arthur Leung's children and Kim Hong's children and grandchildren. Bill Ping says: "I grew up as a half Chinese but a lot of others in my age had both Chinese parents so that they could speak Chinese. But in my family, we spoke English in the house because Mom didn't speak Chinese. The only way we heard Chinese was when Dad talked to someone else. And also, we grew up in St. John's so that we made friends in school and around the neighbourhood. Just never cut on the Chinese language" (Bill Ping 2012).

Many children of Chinese descent raised in families with both Chinese parents also struggle to manage the language. Hong Wang, a professor of Statistics of Memorial University and the current principal of the local Chinese Language School self-criticizes, "I guess I didn't do a good job in teaching my son Chinese although I am the principal of the Chinese language school. He told me that he was not interested in Chinese language and culture." (Hong Wang 2009) Zachery Pan also says, "One day, I apologized to my elder son for not teaching him Chinese. I told him that I made a mistake. I also have a nephew who came to Canada after his graduation from elementary school in China. You actually learn a lot of Chinese in elementary school. But when he got here, he learned English and dropped Chinese, so a few years later, he forgot all his Chinese. What a waste! Now he is working as a real estate agent and he met a lot of Chinese buyers but he couldn't communicate with them in Chinese so he lost a lot of business." (Pan 2012) Regarding Chinese language education, Chien Ming Yeh comments:

I found that a lot of local-born Chinese couldn't speak any Chinese and I think that is the worst education ever. My daughter, who was also Canadian born, but she can speak Mandarin and Taiwanese [Hokkien]. I always push her to learn and I told her, "Don't forget your roots." I think that Chinese language and its associated culture should be transmitted from one generation to another. I found that many local-born children learn western culture and tradition only. Some of them even reject their own ancestral

heritage. A lot of people identify themselves as Canadian instead of calling themselves Chinese or at least Chinese Canadians. That is incorrect. We should maintain our culture and traditions .(Chien Ming Yeh 2013)

Many people blame the lack of Chinese language proficiency of Chinese descendants on the disappointing performance of the local Chinese Language School which was founded in 1980 under the direction of Choy Hew and Miriam Yu with the support of a Heritage Language Grant from the Canadian Secretary of State (Kim Hong 2009). The initial goal of this educational program was to pass along traditional ideas, languages and other important aspects of Chinese culture to the next generation. In the beginning, the Chinese Language School offered Cantonese and Mandarin classes at various levels. Early teachers were well-educated professionals or their spouses such as Daisy Tsoa [wife of Eugene Tsoa, a professor of economics at Memorial University], who were mainly from Taiwan or Hong Kong (Hong Wang 2009). Before the school was suspended due to the low enrolment in 2010, many local Chinese parents sent their children to attend classes to pick up some Chinese language. Chan Chau Tam recalls, “When Dr. Miriam Yu was the principal of the Chinese school, I sent my two daughters there to learn Cantonese” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Lili Wang says: “My daughter actually attended Chinese school in Edmonton. So when we settled down in St. John’s, we decided to continue her Chinese language education. At the time, Mrs. Daisy Tsao was the principal of the Chinese school. She was so nice to the kids and knowledgeable” (Lili Wang 2012).

However, some parents found that the Chinese Language School was not that helpful. Shinn Jia Hwang comments, “We did send our children to the Chinese school every week, but they would forget quickly if they don’t get a chance to use it” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Chin Tan suggests: “The Chinese Language School, in my opinion, should teach more conversational Mandarin instead of structuring like formal Chinese education in mainland

China or Taiwan. The formal education teaches a lot of things that are boring and not practical, like Chinese phonetics. My kids always complained when they were younger: 'No, no. I don't want to go to the Chinese school.' They didn't enjoy it" (Chin Tan 2012). Thus, Lili Wang says: "I expect to see a better Chinese school program so that our kids could learn Chinese language and culture. The current language school is not that organized and well structured" (Lili Wang 2012).

In response to the complaints on the Chinese Language School, Wendy Long comments: "A lot of parents here want their children to learn some Chinese, but what they do is hoping instead of actually supporting. Daily practice is very important in learning a new language. If Chinese parents don't speak Chinese at home, how can their children learn the language?" (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012). In some families, there is a language supporting environment to push children of Chinese descent to learn their parents' native languages. Wallace Hong observes, "My wife always talked to my kids in Chinese although her English is okay. So she made them able to pick up some Chinese. My kids also learned a lot of Chinese from my mother who never learned English and only talked to them in Cantonese when she looked after them" (Wallace Hong 2013). Likewise, May Soo says she was influenced at an early age by her grandmother:

At age 2 in Corner Brook, my paternal grandmother arrived from China. She was my sole caretaker while my parents worked at the restaurant. She did not speak any English and only spoke to me in Chinese. She even sang nursery rhymes to me which I still remember bits and pieces to this day. My parents insisted that I speak English only to those who cannot speak Chinese. That is how I was able to preserve the Cantonese language. Some older Chinese were mighty surprised that I even know some "village slang" from days gone by that are seldom used in China by younger generations. That is because I always conversed with my grandparents, who were of the older generation. For example "vong kay" is a word for ladder, and "leiah heiah" means dirty or messy and "voy hao" means table. When I was 12, my maternal grandparents arrived to Canada. My grandfather was a scholar in China and decided that my cousins and I needed to learn how to write Chinese. He had the learning tools and the books and taught us the basics. My cousins and I lost interest after a year or so and discontinued.

As far as I am concerned, knowing how to sign my name, that's good enough for me [laughs]. (May Soo 2013)

Without opportunities to speak Chinese, children may find language acquisition frustratingly slow when it is confined to one two-hour class per week at Chinese Language School. Mark Chan's experience provides a good example to illustrate the important role family plays:

When I was younger, I didn't know the meaning to learn Chinese, Cantonese in my case, 'cause my parents were from Hong Kong. I went to the Chinese Language School but sometimes, I just didn't pay attention to the instructor. I could understand Cantonese, but my speaking was not good. When I started to attend public school and learned English, my Cantonese got worse and sometimes I could not understand. My parents saw this and they didn't want me to lose my heritage. So, they told me that only Chinese was accepted in the house and Chinese TV channels were purchased. If I didn't speak Chinese to them, they would ignore me. I still remember, one time, I got back from school and I was so hungry. I spoke English to my parents and told them I wanted to have some meal, but they didn't even look at me. I knew they heard and understood what I was saying, I knew it, but they just didn't answer me until I used Chinese. Now, I picked up all my Chinese and I feel good about that. (Mark Chan 2011)

Francis Tam also recalls:

When I was young, I was only allowed to speak Cantonese at home. My mom and my grandparents were more traditional and they said, "We don't want you to speak English at home. You are going to learn English well in school. We don't want you to lose language that we talk to you." Because my parents were busy and my grandparents were busy, they always set up Cantonese TV shows or movies for me to watch. Those video cassette tapes were sent in from Ontario. I was always asked to sit in front of the TV. That actually was the way how I learned my Cantonese. Therefore, I can speak Cantonese pretty fluently. I can recognize probably 150 characters. I guess it is not bad because we had no Chinese school where I grew up. I actually learned Cantonese first and that is my first language. (Francis Tam 2013)

At Kim Hong's Christmas house party on December 25, 2009, his mother Mrs. Mong (nee Hum 譚) gave me a note, in which she wrote in Chinese, "Please tell my grandsons to send their children to Chinese Language School to learn Chinese." However, few Chinese parents push

their children like May's, Mark's and Francis' parents (and grandparents) did and Mrs. Mong would like. Why do many Chinese parents tolerate their children refusing to speak in Chinese?

Yuming Zhao's words well answer this question. He explains:

How the second generation people of Chinese descent look at their identity[-ies] highly rely on how their parents educate their children. When their children were younger, if the parents can educate their children to respect the traditional Chinese culture and values and to be proud of their cultural differences, these children will definitely have more emotional and cultural attachment to their own cultural roots. But what I know is, many parents haven't done a good job. When these children's parents or grandparents came to Canada, they thought that they were leaving a poor country, economically and culturally, for a much better life. They actually felt that they fled out of the old country. If they came to Canada with this kind of idea in mind, they actually consciously or unconsciously wanted to reject the old lifestyle and culture in the old country. When they started their life in Canada, what they were thinking might be: how could I become a Canadian? The first thing to catch up would be the language. Therefore, these parents were proud of their children's perfect English. However, in many cases, these parents ignored a very important fact that, to a large extent, their children were still 100% Chinese physically and sometimes, culturally. For example, they were still eating Chinese food and their households were still full of Chinese-themed stuff. When these children grew up, they were so confused about their identity. When I was a student in Edmonton, I had a lot of classmates who were second-generation Chinese. On one hand, they looked just like Chinese but they couldn't speak Chinese. They had a lot of difficulties to interact with Chinese student groups because of the language barrier. On the other hand, they were also different from local non-Chinese people. Even if they were speaking perfect English, their parents were still Chinese, who would cook Chinese food at home and still behaved as Chinese in many ways.

As I have said, when people came to a new country, more or less, it indicated their rejection to the culture of the old country. If people were proud of their own culture, I wouldn't think that they would like to give up their life in the old country unless in the war times or because of natural disasters. To be honest, nobody forced us to come here; rather, we were willing to come. Therefore, people like us, so-called the intelligent class or elite class who came here for a North American education, had less sense of belonging to the old culture when we were younger. However, when we have more experience and become more mature, a lot of people may return to appreciate their own heritage because we were born and raised in that culture, which was ineradicable. As for our children, the second generation, I have no idea how they will choose their identity. (Yuming Zhao 2012)

Katherine Huang's story well reflects Yuming Zhao's point:

When I first came to Newfoundland, I was so self-abased because I thought I was a Chinese and I was poorer than local people, who seemed more educated and intelligent

than me. Therefore, I didn't teach my children to speak Chinese. As a matter of fact, when I was in the United States, all my friends talked to their kids in English. They thought it was great because their kids could learn English better in that way. Moreover, it was not only for the benefit of their children, but also good for parents too because they could therefore learn perfect English from their kids. So when I had my children, I followed the way of my friends in the States. But now I so regret about my decision. I think I was so selfish. (Katherine Huang 2012)

As adults, Katherine Huang's children developed an interest in Chinese heritage. She is so delighted to tell me that, "My son is now working in Ottawa now and there are some Mandarin-speaking Chinese in his neighbourhood. They teach him Chinese a lot. Now, my son is actively learning Chinese from his friends and taking online lessons. A friend of his also teaches him to cook Chinese food and he can cook much better than me now. Also, he has his own child and he is teaching his kid Chinese" (Katherine Huang 2012).

The returning of the second generation or later generation Chinese to their ancestral heritage does not necessarily indicate that they look at their cultural identity the same as their parents and grandparents. Rather, the later generation of Chinese descent creates a new identity to embrace both cultures (Chinese and local) instead of choosing either side. However, many struggle mostly psychologically, during the process of constructing their identity. Francis Tam's experience illustrates what many second or later generation of Chinese descent have suffered. He notes:

A lot of times when I was growing up, there were some identity crisis issues and a lot of questions like "who am I?" and "what group do I belong to?" There were, in my younger years especially, internal battles in my mind. I think, this is not unusual for children of visible minority immigrants, for many reasons. Because I look Chinese and not white, I feel judged sometimes as an "other." I get compliments on my English, although I was born here, or when asked where I am from, Corner Brook is not an acceptable response. "Where are you *really* from?" or "I mean, where do your people come from?" Usually follows. While this doesn't bother me now, as a child and teenager, it bothered me a lot. Because I am Canadian born, I am also not considered 100% Chinese by the older immigrant generation. There is a Cantonese term the older folks would use to refer to me and the other Canadian born kids, "jook sing," or "hollow bamboo" meaning that we look Chinese, but are empty of Chinese culture and customs inside. Because of some rejection on both sides, I often felt like I did not belong in any group.

In school, being one of the only Chinese kids made me feel a bit self conscious, but what was worse was that I felt like an outsider because I could not socialize and experience the same things as "normal" kids my age. Growing up in a traditional Chinese immigrant family was tough. I was the first born child and only son, so there were a lot of expectations of me. For example, I worked in our family restaurant even as a child and it was expected of me to come home right after school to start working. As the other kids were discussing their weekend plans in school on Friday I would try to ignore them because I knew I could not join in. On Monday, I would have to listen to them talk about their great weekends and feel even more isolated. I had some friends, but they were mostly school acquaintances because I couldn't socialize with them outside school very often. Dating was also out of the question, especially with local Newfoundland girls, which were the only choices for me in our town at the time. At 18, I got a girlfriend, a white girl which of course my parents disapproved. I married her and there was quite a bit of tension for some time up until a few years after I got married. Because of these tensions and the identity issues I was feeling, I went through a period of depression where my education and relationships suffered. It was so difficult to balance my Chinese side with my Western side. Looking back, I think if I had have had counseling, maybe from someone with experience with being a second generation like myself, I might have handled things a little better. At the time, I was very upset and it seemed like no one understood. I just wish there are more outreach programs for not just Chinese Canadians, but also other ethnicities that who were born here and have that psychological battle in their mind regarding their identity issues. I think because of this identity struggle, some of my Asian friends choose the western side and try to get rid the old heritage. Maybe some people cannot deal with both so they pick one of them. The identity issue that all second generation Chinese go through, every one of us. Each of us handles it differently. I just happen to decide to embrace both sides.

As an adult in my 30's with a family and a career, I have come to accept and embrace both Chinese and Western parts of myself. I can speak fluent Cantonese, I can watch movies and listen to the music, and I know so much about Asian pop culture and discuss it with my Chinese born friends. Even when I am working and talking with my colleagues in English, in my mind, I translate it into Chinese. You will find a lot of CBC like myself would do that. I do speak to my internal voice in Chinese. Or vice versa, I can speak Cantonese and think of English. This is almost like another skill. I celebrate Chinese holidays, such as Mid-Autumn festival and Chinese New Year. I also celebrate Christmas and Easter and other western holidays, as well as enjoy Hollywood movies and North American pop culture. I treasure that I can speak and understand both Cantonese and English. I am proud of being a Newfoundlander as well, I say with pride that I was born and raised in Newfoundland. I love my cod tongues, my jig's dinner and I love to go down to the shore and around the bay. I love to talk to locals about things I do in Newfoundland. I think that when I became a father, my appreciation for my Chinese side deepened. I wanted Kai, my son, to know about the culture. I don't want the culture to end with me and I want to pass the culture to the next generation who will know who they are, where they come from and what their

culture is. I want him to embrace both cultures. In my opinion, it is possible to be both Chinese and Canadian, but finding the balance is a difficult journey. (Francis Tam 2013)

May Soo, growing up as a Canadian born Chinese with immigrant parents also finds difficult in balancing her identity of being Chinese and being Canadian:

In my early years of schooling in Grand Falls in the mid-1960's, not only was I the only Chinese person in the whole school, I was the only minority. I was ridiculed by some classmates who called me “mustardface” and “chink.” During recess time I was pushed around and had snowballs thrown at me. Needless to say, my early school days were not pleasant memories for me. As a pre-teen, I started helping out in my Dad’s restaurant, The Taiwan Restaurant after school and on weekends until I graduated from high school and moved away for university. During my teenage years, I had a very strict upbringing. I was never allowed to attend any school dances or extracurricular activities because my parents were always afraid I would be influenced by the wrong crowd. For example when I was a cheerleader at a school hockey game, my dad would attend the game. His excuse was to watch the hockey game, but his intent was to supervise me. Not only was I not allowed to date white guys, I was not allowed to hang out with Chinese girls who had white boyfriends. It was tough being so isolated from the other kids at school. When I was 14, I was so fed up with my parent's strict rules that I packed up my bag, wanting to run away from home. One time, I actually defied my parents and went to a movie with a white boy. I lied to my parents that I was going to the movies with a waitress. We sat in the front row of the movie theatre, slouched in my seat, to make myself less visible. 30 minutes into the movie, I turned my head to the left and saw my dad sauntering towards me. He did not have to say anything. One look and I knew. He walked out of the theatre with me walking and hanging my head in shame behind him. I felt so upset wondering why me, why couldn't I just fit in and be like everybody else? (May Soo 2013)

The more communication there was with the wider society, the more the Chinese in Newfoundland adopted a non-traditional Chinese lifestyle in terms of foodways, ritual practices and other social aspects. These adoptions, which are labelled as disidentifiers by Erving Goffman (1963, 44), are strategies/self-motivated preferences of the Chinese to achieve deeper integration into the mainstream society, and subsequently, may also be their attempt to consciously or unconsciously opt out of their ethnic group. However, as Miri Song notes, “Opting out is rarely a complete solution, because in order to successfully opt out of a group, one must be able to opt into, and gain membership in, another group” (Song 2003, 57).

In the case of the Chinese, opting out is not easy because of the “perpetual foreigner syndrome,” a term coined by Sucheng Chan (1991, 187) and used by many researchers in this field to describe the situation whereby individuals, especially those of Asian descents, are treated as foreigners in their own countries (e.g. Lee 2002, Sue 2010, Tuan 2005[1998] and Wu 2002). According to Frank Wu, who substantially developed Chan’s concept, every Asian living in North America, no matter if s/he is a new arrival or has been in this continent for generations, is thought to be “figuratively and even literally returned to Asia and ejected from America.” (Wu 2002, 79) Wu’s strong words underline the fact that Asian Americans, have the same rights as other Americans and should not be regarded as second class citizens, socially or culturally. In Francis Tam’s words, “I don’t really belong to the western culture because I am a visible minority and people judge you right away by your appearance. People always asked me, ‘Where are you from?’ and they were surprised when I opened my mouth and spoke perfect English. So they said, ‘Obviously, you are from here.’ I said, ‘Correct’” (Francis Tam 2013). His wife Amy (Smith) Tam, a Caucasian Newfoundlander comments: “Some people look at Francis and see ‘Chinese,’ while I am aware of his ethnicity and I am not one of those who are ‘colorblind’ when it comes to race and ethnicity, I don’t see him as overly “Chinese” because he was born and raised here. Why should he be any less western than children born here to Russian or German parents?” (Amy Tam 2013).

It is not uncommon that people of Chinese descent still experience the so-called “perpetual foreigner syndrome.” On September 12, 2013, Gordon Jin and his colleagues were having lunch together at Magic Wok Eatery. One gentleman sitting at the table next to them turned to Gordon and asked, “You must not be from Newfoundland, aren’t you?” Simon Tam, who was also at the table, said to the man, “He was actually born here.” In an interview with Ban Seng Hoe, Gordon

said, “When I look back, I think those people who made fun of Chinese were not tolerant and open-minded. I am a Canadian as they are. I just don’t look Canadian to them” (Gordon Jin 2009). Daniel Wong says: “No matter how you identify yourself and what language you speak, you still look like Chinese to others” (Daniel Wong 2013).

However, on some occasions, the denial of one’s heritage and group affiliation may appear to be a reasonable response of some people to some situations. The dilemma of those who did not fully fit into any existing groups summoned the rise of a new group whose members self-identified and were identified as “in-betweeners,” (“cultural wanderers,” the term I use in this thesis), which term is applied by Kenneth Pryce in his study to label a young generation of West Indians in Britain (Pryce 1979). According to Pryce, this group of people declared their membership as West Indians instead of full British citizenship, but they shaped their own understanding of what being West Indians means in the British society (Pryce 1979).

In Newfoundland cultural wanderers or in-betweeners are the group of Newfoundland-born or -raised Chinese young people who hesitate in response to questions like “are you a Chinese?” To some of my interviewees, it is not a “yes” or “no” question and many of them provide indirect answers as I have mentioned above. In many cases, identity is complicated for these Chinese Newfoundlanders; they feel that they do not fit comfortably into the Chinese community because they have been fully acculturated into the Newfoundland and Canadian society yet they retain aspects of their Chinese identity and value their heritage. These second-or-third generation Chinese Newfoundlanders, due to the influences they experience from two distinct cultures, often describe a sense of identity that is ambiguous and situational (Cohen 1978), or part-time (Fleras and Elliott 1996). Some cases, like that of Katherine Huang, also suggest that even first generation Chinese sometimes prefer to distance themselves from Chinese culture. Members of a

younger generation of Chinese like Francis Tam and Bill Ping are more likely to adopt a kind of combined or “hybrid” identity as Chinese Newfoundlanders or as “Chinese Newfies” rather other than describe themselves either as “Chinese” or “Newfoundlander.”

The growth of the established community of old immigrants mainly from Toisan, the arrival of new professionals with various regional backgrounds, and the emergence of younger generations of Newfoundland-born and/or-raised-Chinese-the in-betweeners- in the post-Confederation era, especially during the post-1967 period, transformed the Chinese community from a relatively homogeneous urban ethnic neighborhood to fragmented networks. This group labeled as “Chinese in Newfoundland” consists of sub-communities, small friendship-based groups, families or individuals. In this sense, it is no longer safe to call the Chinese in Newfoundland a homogeneous ethnic community whose members are linked by shared historical experience, culture, ethnicity, and identity. Instead, one must pay attention to the emergence of divergent, cooperative and sometimes competing Chinese sub-groups in the cultural landscape of Newfoundland. There is not a unified Chinese community in Newfoundland.

Dorothy Noyes claims that, “The community exists as the project of a network or of some of its members. Networks exist insofar as their ties are continually recreated and revitalized in interaction” (Noyes 2003, 33). Building on Anderson’s notion of “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), there must be visible or invisible connections either binding individuals or superficially separating sub-communities. These bring people together as a community and at the same time keep outsiders as others or associate members without full membership. There is also a third space that exists between the subjective esoteric presentation of an individual self and the unified exoteric presentation of a community. Noyes points out that “the performance that constructs the community ideologically and emotionally also strengthens or changes the shape of

networks by promoting interaction; it may even have the effect of breaking up a network by redrawing the boundaries within it” (Noyes 2003, 33).

In the following chapters, I employ three case studies--foodways (Chapter Four), local Chinese New Year celebrations (Chapter Five) and Chinese lion dance in Newfoundland (Chapter Six)--to explore how individual and/or small groups of Chinese Newfoundlanders perform their cultural identity(-ies). These examples demonstrate how individuals construct their own versions of Chineseness or non-Chineseness in interactions with both co-ethnics and outsiders within the discourse of multiculturalism.

Chapter Four: Negotiating Chinese Culinary Traditions in Newfoundland

Having grown up in a Chinese restaurant in Grand Falls, May Soo says, “I recall growing up, my classmates would say ‘You’re so lucky your parents own a restaurant. Mmm all those chicken balls. Do you eat them for free?’ Honestly in my lifetime, I had never eaten more than two dozen, as it was not the real Chinese food we ate at home” (May Soo 2013). So if chicken balls are not considered “real” Chinese food, what exactly is “Chinese food”? Here I explore this complicated question in the context of St. John’s and investigate three related and overlapping Chinese culinary traditions in Newfoundland: domestic foodways of Chinese residents, or the food they eat at home; North American style Chinese food served in the majority of local Chinese restaurants; and “traditional” dishes more recently featured on the menus of some Chinese restaurants. In considering how Chinese individuals draw on and interpret these specific forms of Chinese foodways, I also reflect on how they negotiate different, and sometimes competing, opinions of culinary authenticity, which, in this chapter, is conceptualized as something or a status which is believed or accepted as genuine or real (Taylor 1991, 17) and closely associated with their perceptions of ethnicity.

Food, Identity and Folklore

As I have mentioned earlier, although the Chinese represent Newfoundland and Labrador’s largest non-indigenous “visible minority” with a single ethnic origin, they comprise only 0.26 percent of the province’s total population (Statistics Canada 2006). Without a Chinatown and other public opportunities available in larger centers, the twenty-five plus Chinese restaurants and four Chinese groceries stores located in St John’s become important markers of local

Chinese culture and locations for both Chinese and non-Chinese to define, negotiate and re-define what “Chinese” means to them.

The connection of food to ethnic or cultural identity has been established by scholars in a variety of disciplines including folklore, anthropology and other fields. The power of food (as well as other aspects of foodways) as a marker of identity is well documented (e.g. see Humphrey and Humphrey 1991 [1988], Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993); it has the power to express a group’s key cultural elements because it is performable, displayable and culturally consumable (Humphrey and Humphrey 1991, 194). They have examined how cultural identities, especially ethnicities are expressed individually or collectively, negotiated through intra-or inter-group communication and sometimes, recreated in new social and cultural circumstances through foodways (e.g., Brown and Mussel 1984, Douglas 1984, Fischler 1988, Gabbacia 1998, Georges 1984, Humphrey and Humphrey 1991 [1988], Kaplan 1984, 1986; Li 2002, Lockwood and Lockwood 1991, 2000; Shortridge and Shortridge 1998, Van den Berghe 1984, Van Esterik 1982). David Bell and Gill Valentine (1997, 168) argue that “food and the nation are so comingled in popular discourses that it is often difficult not to think one through the other...”

According to Claude Fischler, foodways are central to identity because an individual “eats, so to speak, within a culture, and this culture orders the world in a way that is specific to itself.” Therefore, “cooking helps to give food and its eaters a place in the world, a meaning” (Fischler 1988, 281-286). Charles Camp also notes that “food is one of the most, if not the single most, visible badges of identity” (Camp 1989, 29). In many cases, food and its associated practices can be crucial when considering immigrants’ immigration experiences and the social construction of their identities. Anne Kaplan suggests in the introduction of *The Minnesota Ethnic Food Book* that traditional foodways is often used by a particular group to serve for self-reflection,

interaction with members of other groups and cosmological purposes (connecting to the natural world and a deity (Kaplan 1986). In the same vein, Donna Gabaccia remarks that “immigrants sought to maintain their familiar foodways because food initiated and maintained traditional relationships, expressed the extent of social distance between people, demonstrated status and prestige, rewarded and punished children’s behavior, and treated illness” (Gabaccia 1998, 51). Based on his own family foodways, Robert Georges reports how his ethnicity as a Greek descendant is often emphasized in family gatherings and how people expect his response to the traditional ethnic food (Georges 1984).

Researchers have investigated food’s role in the reinforcement, construction and/or deconstruction of immigrants’ identities during the processes of immigration, acculturation and cultural promotion. As shown in some studies, foodways may connect or reconnect members of the same imagined group, serve as a bridge for inter-group communication in a multicultural society, and/or be seen as a cultural divider to separate “us” and “others” (e.g. Brown and Mussell 1984 and Gabaccia 1998). For example, David E. Sutton looks at the nostalgic role of foodways in individuals’ diasporic experience and explores the relation between food and memory (Sutton 2001). According to Sutton, the experience / re-experience of traditional food evokes the emotional and cultural recollections of individuals (Sutton 2001). In their influential book *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, the editors Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell write that, “foodways bind individuals together, define the limits of the group’s outreach and identity, distinguish in-group from out-group, serve as a medium of inter-group communication, celebrate cultural cohesion, and provide a context for performance of group rituals” (Brown and Mussell 1984, 5). Therefore, Roger Abrahams classifies food stereotypes as being a type of “deep stereotype,” which contains the substantial

characteristics perceived by a group of people of others based on esoteric and exoteric factors (Abrahams 1984).

Sometimes, a certain group of people may adopt foodways of another group and create a new but to differentiate themselves from some other groups. For example, Gaye Tuchman and Harry G. Levine (1993) and Mu Li (2011) explore how eating Chinese food on Christmas Day is defined by Jewish people in large American cities (New York in particular) as their holiday tradition and more importantly, a response to Christmas festivities. It expresses their unique ethnic and religious identity separate from other American, notably Christian, groups. This example not only suggests that the role of foodways as an ethnic or cultural marker is often situational and sometimes appropriated, but also reminds us that identities are not fixed but are fluid and socially constructed and reconstructed within various social circumstances. It reflects existing and imagined structural constraints and lived experiences of individuals. Therefore, in the sense that identity, which is very complicated and ever changing/changed, is individual and situational, the connection of food to ethnic identity is far from self-evident. Chinese foodways in Newfoundland provide an opportunity for people of Chinese descent to look at their tradition and the immigration experience.

The Chinese Foodways at Home

The emergence of Chinese culinary tradition in Newfoundland can be traced to the arrival of Chinese immigrants, who brought foodways with them. For example, a preference for rice, which is a staple of Chinese foodways, was described in a 1906 article titled “Demand for Rice” that appeared in *Trade Review*, a local journal:

There is one article of domestic supply that the St. John’s grocery man finds it had to keep stocked now-a-days. That article is rice, and its increase in consumption is entirely

due to the gentleman from China, who has lately come amongst us. Our Oriental visitor endeavors to conform to Western ways in many particulars. He frequently cuts off his pigtails; he has discarded the picturesque blouse of his ancestors, and has substituted the Western coat therefor [sic], and he encases his feet in Caucasian shoes. But, in the privacy of his home, he still sticks to rice as his principal article of diet, hence the big demand for that class of goods here at present. (*Trade Review* November 24, 1906)

As this article suggests, Chinese immigrants often attempted to stick to their familiar foodways which was commonly practiced in their home communities. In Chinese households in St. John's, traditional food has always been consumed on a daily basis. Kim Hong recalls:

At the time when I came to St. John's in 1950, I stayed with my grandfather [who came to Newfoundland in 1910] at the John Lee Laundry on Gower Street and they cooked rice in every meal. To go with the rice, they would cook some Chinese food which was often ordered from Montreal like salt fish, some dried vegetables, and other things that Chinese would normally eat. They also used local meat and vegetables like cabbage and potato. They cooked them in their way obviously. (Kim Hong 2013)

Many Chinese provisions, such as soy sauce, dried seafood and other widely used Chinese ingredients such as green onions and ginger roots, were either brought along by immigrant laborers or imported directly from China to North America (Coe 2009; Roberts 2002). However, as Kim Hong mentioned, many Chinese goods in the early days were not available in Newfoundland.

When I asked my interviewees what their biggest challenge was at the beginning of their adjustment to life in Newfoundland, I expected a variety of answers. However, most Chinese immigrants to Newfoundland I spoke to reported confronting a very similar difficulty: a lack of "Chinese food." For example, E.T. Tjan recalls, "The biggest challenge we had was food. There was no Chinese food in Newfoundland" (E.T. Tjan 2012). E.T. Tjan and other Chinese immigrants were not looking for fancy or exotic Chinese delicacies, but common Chinese groceries such as soya sauce, garlic, ginger and green onion for everyday home cooking. These are the ingredients (spices, sauces and vegetables) that form the basis of Chinese foodways

throughout Chinese centers (mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) and overseas Chinese communities (e.g. Southeast Asian countries and North America). A few decades later, when Stephen Feng came to Newfoundland as a graduate student from Guangdong Province, China, the situation had improved. However, he still encountered limitations: “When I arrived in St. John’s in 2007, it was still hard to get some Chinese groceries, such as choy sum, Chinese broccoli and bitter melon, which were so common in my hometown” (Stephen Feng 2012).

In some cases, a lack of Chinese groceries represented the most difficult adjustment; the disappointing weather conditions and dull social life were tolerable but not being able to eat the food that you grew up with was a real hardship. As Alick Tsui, a Hong Kong native, says, “I came in the winter of 1986, but I was not actively looking for Chinese families to enjoy my pastime during the storms. All I wanted at the time were Chinese groceries. Only if I can get Chinese groceries, I would be okay” (Alick Tsui 2012). In the end, the unavailability of Chinese groceries forced some Chinese families to adopt local groceries and adapt to local foodways. For example, Wendy Long says, “I had to force the whole family to adapt to local life” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012).

However, the process of culinary acculturation may not be easy. Shinn Jia Hwang recalls:

I came to Newfoundland in 1968. Before my wife immigrated to Newfoundland, I stayed at the on-campus residence. For convenience reasons, I took the meal plan at the university’s dining hall, which mainly served traditional Newfoundland food. Some [meals] were delicious but some others really turned me down, say kidney pie. Every time, when my Chinese friends and I showed up at the door of dining hall and detected the strong smell. “Oh my, kidney pie!” we would run away immediately. (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012)

Ching Hsiang Lin, Shinn Jia Hwang’s wife, continues to tell the story of kidney pie, “On the days of kidney pie, they would cook some noodle soups with groceries such as Chinese vermicelli and Chinese Hot pickled tuber mustard that we sent in from Taiwan. He once said, the

person who invented the hot pickled tuber mustard should be awarded a Nobel Prize” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Hwang’s story suggests that, instead of totally adapting to local foodways, many Chinese immigrants keep their culinary tradition whenever possible. May Soo recounts this amusing story:

Even though my grandmother lived in Newfoundland all her life since her arrival in 1959, she never did adapt to westernized food. She said all the ingredients were mangled together and either boiled or baked, smothered in sauce and served with bread. I never saw her consume anything other than rice. Needless to say, as she got older, her medical problems landed her a few hospital stays and eventually she moved into a nursing home. While there, meals of rice were cooked from home and brought up every day because she refused to eat the food served there. However, she did love jello! My Newfoundland grandmother on the other extreme, did not consume any Chinese cuisine at all. So during her travel to Asia one year, my grandfather had to have all of her [her Newfoundland grandmother] meals special ordered when they dined out. (May Soo 2013)

In some other families, eating Chinese food is not voluntary but more compulsory. Wendy Long says, “I always cook Chinese food at home. At the beginning, my son didn’t like it, but I kept cooking in Chinese style and told him, ‘If you don’t want to eat Chinese food, that is fine, but you have to do your own cooking’” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012). Therefore, in some cases, Chinese cooking in the domestic domain has a significant impact on the development of individual taste. Gordon Jin says, “Some of the dishes I like are what Mom and Dad cooked, such as roast chicken with green onions and ginger roots and BBQ pork. They made a lot of traditional Chinese dishes” (Gordon Jin 2009).

Some second-generation Chinese also stick to Chinese flavors, having been introduced to them by their parents at home. Lewis Yang, whose family was from Northern China, says:

Regarding my own dietary habits, yes, I eat Chinese [food] a lot. I grow up learning how to cook from my dad so I cook all the time. I say at least 4 of 7 days a week. I ate Chinese food that I cooked, and if I order out, sometime I order Chinese too. It is what I used to, and so eating that is more satisfying than some of the other types of food that may or may not agree with my stomach. (Lewis Yang 2013)

As these comments suggest, in many families, “traditional” Chinese cooking is transmitted from the older generation to the younger. Bill Ping says, “When dad was still alive, he always asked us to come home early. So Violet always got a chance to stand next to dad and look at how he cooked. Then she made her own little cookbook” (Bill Ping 2012).

Some foodways scholars point out that Chinese culture is food-centered and traditional dishes contain social and cultural meanings so that Chinese individuals often try to maintain the foodways of their home communities in order to connect to their cultural roots (e.g. Simoons 1991 and Wu and Cheung 2002). Ching Hsiang Lin says, “We make traditional food for almost every important festival. We make zongzi [a Chinese sticky rice cake] for Dragon Boat Festival, we make moon cakes for moon festival and on Chinese New Year’s Eve, we have hot pot party with family and friends. Every time when I mentioned the Dragon Boat Festival, the first response of my children would be, ‘Oh, the festival that we can get zongzi’” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Therefore, the availability of Chinese groceries is of importance to people of Chinese descent in maintaining their festive and cultural life.

When Chinese groceries were difficult to get locally, some people would drop by Chinatowns in bigger Canadian cities during their vacation or business trips. For example, E.T. Tjan says, “On our trips to the bigger cities, we would bring back a lot of groceries, especially sauces, for the rest of the year” (E. T. Tjan 2012). In addition, some people would turn to their parents or relatives in their home countries or in bigger Canadian cities to send them Chinese groceries by mail. Chin Tan says, “My mom used to send me Chinese groceries such as mushrooms and soya sauce from Malaysia” (Chin Tan 2012). In regards to international shipment, Ching Hsiang Lin shares a humorous story, “I complained a lot about the lack of Chinese groceries in Newfoundland to my sister in Taiwan. One day, I got a parcel from Taiwan

and it was so smelly. I could tell from the face of the postman. When I opened it, it was a whole package of peeled garlic. They were all moldy after a long journey” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). People outside of Newfoundland continue to send Chinese groceries to their families and friends in this province. Bill Ping says, “My brother still sends me Chinese ingredients from Toronto and sometimes I don’t even need to ask” (Bill Ping 2012).

More commonly, Chinese people placed orders with wholesale Chinese grocery stores in Vancouver or Montreal. Kim Hong says, “Chinese food was normally sent in from either Montreal or Vancouver [not Toronto at the time] and delivered by COD [Cash on Delivery]. At that time, you had to order by mail. That was how you got oyster sauce, soy sauce, salt fish, and lotus roots. We probably sent in letters two or three times a year.” (Kim Hong 2013) During the summer months, Chinese people also grew their own vegetables. Kim Hong recalls, “In the summer, we grew some vegetables, like bok choy, Chinese broccoli, snow peas in the backyard of our laundry” (Kim Hong 2013).

As more and more Chinese residents bought groceries from outside of Newfoundland, a few local grocery stores started to carry more Asian groceries. Mary Jane’s, a health food store in downtown St. John’s, which opened in 1968, was the first local store that sold a limited selection of Chinese groceries (Kim Hong 2013). Many Chinese still remember how Mary Jane’s changed their culinary life. Ching Hsiang Lin says, “We were so excited to see that Mary Jane’s started to sell ginger roots in 1973” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Mary Jane’s closed in around 1996, but in recent years, Chinese groceries have become more accessible in Newfoundland. Currently, there are four Chinese grocery stores in St. John’s including the Magic Wok Grocery (see Figure 16 and 17) and Asian Variety downtown, the Oriental Snow Store at the Memorial University’s student center and the new opened Just Goody Mart near the

university. Some chain supermarkets like Costco, Sobeys and Dominion also carry a variety of Chinese goods.



Figure 16: Magic Wok Grocery on Duckworth Street, St. John's (Exterior)



Figure 17: Magic Wok Grocery on Duckworth Street, St. John's (Interior)

Dominion, in particular, carries a large selection and each location has a specific “Chinese food” section. Not surprisingly, these changes are welcomed by the Chinese in Newfoundland. Wendy

Long says, “I am so glad that I can get bok choy at Costco. It makes my life much easier now” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012). The increased availability of Chinese groceries allows people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland, mainly in St. John’s area, to more easily maintain culinary traditions of their home countries. Kim Hong says, “When Cosmas Ho came to Newfoundland in 1962, there was not many restaurants serving Chinese food and apparently, you could not get Chinese food in local grocery stores. I therefore brought him to my grandfather’s laundry. He was so delighted to get genuine Chinese food. The Chinese food cooked by my grandfather in the laundry was very similar to what I had in China” (Kim Hong 2013). Francis Tam also says, “My grandparents and parents always tried to cook as traditional as possible if groceries were available. Sometimes, my grandfather would do traditional dishes like ma po tofu 麻婆豆腐” (Francis Tam 2013). In Tam’s case, dishes like ma po tofu were only cooked for special and important occasions like Chinese New Year or family reunions.

Chinese Restaurants in Newfoundland and the Emergence of North American Style Chinese Food

Many scholars attribute the global spread of Chinese food to trade between Chinese and the west, as well as to the migration of Chinese persons to overseas countries (e.g. Coe 2009; Jung 2010; Lee 2008; Roberts 2002; Wu and Cheung 2002). These two streams – trade and migration – represent two distinct ways how Chinese culinary tradition was introduced to other cultures. According to Andrew Coe (2009), elegant and elite Chinese food, such as shark fin soup and bird’s nest soup, were first brought by Chinese wealthy merchants to their Western business partners as a show of generosity and display of wealth as early as the 18th Century. After 1784 when the Americans first met the Chinese in Guangzhou (or Canton City, the capital city of

Guangdong or Canton Province), and especially after signing of the Treaty of Wang Xia 中美望

厦条约 in 1845²¹, international trade between China and the United States flourished. Grand

Chinese restaurants were built in major cities along the Pacific coast to treat wealthy Chinese business persons residing in America and their families, friends and clients.

The Canton Restaurant, which was established in 1849 in San Francisco, is believed to be the first Chinese restaurant in America (Liu and Lin 2009, 136). However, the upper-class Chinese cuisine was not attractive to the privileged white clientele. Coe writes, “In the 1860s, the white elites of San Francisco had no taste for Chinese food. Once or twice a year, they attended ceremonial banquets ... mainly to promote the business interests they shared with the Chinese merchants” (Coe 2009, 107). Chinese food remained unknown to ordinary North Americans who had no opportunity to access this kind of “luxury” Chinese food. Any experience of Chinese foodways they gained came through interactions with Chinese immigrants (Coe 2009, 63). Given that Chinese restaurants were not widely established in Newfoundland until the mid 1950s, this remained the only option during the first decades of Chinese settlement in Newfoundland since the colony, and then the province, had no visible Chinese merchant class. Charlie Snook recalls:

My sister Marjorie and Fronie Mathews were good friends. We were all relatives in Grand Bank. Fronie married Charlie (Hing) Hong [who came to Newfoundland in 1931] in St. John's in 1943 or 1944. Fronie's father, Uncle Jacob Matthews, he was living with Fronie and the family, of course, in St. John's at the Avalon Bar and Grill. And Uncle Jacob died, so they brought his remains back to Grand Bank for burial. And while I was there, Charlie cooked up big feed of Chinese food for us. That was the first time I met a Chinese person and the first time I ate Chinese food. As I remember, it was a big, huge boiler because that was a big crowd. It was a big boiler and there were a lot of tomatoes. I don't know the name of the dinner, but I know it was damn good. It was only one dish. It was almost like a chow mein, those kinds of dish. It was so colorful so that is why I remember. There was no meat in that dish and it was all vegetables. Definitely all vegetables. And there was rice on the side. They brought the rice with them because

²¹ This treaty allowed American cargo ships to access to the five Chinese ports which were forced open to the British as a result of the first Opium War between China and the Great Britain in 1840.

there was no rice in Grand Bank. That was the first time I encounter with Chinese people. (Charlie Snook 2014)

The first record of any Chinese involvement in the food industry dates from 1906 on Bell Island, a community close to the City of St. John's where an iron ore mine employed a considerable number of Chinese labors among its workforce (*Evening Herald* May 22, 1906; *Evening Telegram* May 22, 1906). The food was sold by an anonymous vendor, who was not trained as a cook and did not own a restaurant. A few years later, the first known chef, Nam How Tong, also known as Tom Cook, came to Newfoundland in around 1915 (William Ping 1995a, 12-20; Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1995, 7).

In 1918 (1919 in Ping's memoir), Charlie Fong (Fong Moo Sic) who was related to the Fong family, the oldest Chinese family in Newfoundland, opened the first Chinese-owned restaurant, the King Cafe on Water Street (Ping 1995a, 4; Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador 1995, 7; Yu 1986, 19-20). This was followed four years later by the province's second Chinese-owned restaurant, the Dominion Café, established in 1922 in St. John's by Au Kim Lee. With the growing Chinese population, some immigrants sought occupational opportunities outside of the laundry business. In the relative absence of inter-ethnic conflict in Newfoundland, the number of Chinese owned- restaurants increased and working in the restaurant business became a career for many Chinese immigrants. Up to the 1940s, there were more than 20 Chinese-owned restaurants including snack bars and fish and chip shops in downtown St. John's (Ping 1995a). However, all these restaurants served western cuisine such as steak, pork chops, and fish and chips rather than "Chinese food" (William Ping 1995a, 11-13).

Billy Hong tells me that "things were not changed until late 1950s." During his first 13 years (1953-1966) working experience as a cook in Newfoundland, he did not prepare any Chinese meals except for himself and occasionally, for his Chinese friends. He says:

When I came to Newfoundland in 1953, there was no Chinese food on this island. I was first working in a Chinese-owned restaurant called Station Grill. This restaurant served western food like fish and chips, small steak, pork chop and something else. A few months later, another Chinese-owned restaurant called Sam Restaurant on Bell Island offered me a higher salary, so I went to work for them. The food they served was also similar to that of Station Grill. In 1954, I opened my own restaurant called Sun Café on Bell Island. I followed those restaurants that I used to work, to serve fish and chips and other popular local food. (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013)

The adoption of western foodways was an economic strategy of many early Chinese-owned restaurateurs in cities and towns throughout North America that did not have a sizable Chinese clientele to draw on. In St John's prior to the 1960s, patrons were almost all local Caucasians who likely had little interest in tasting unfamiliar cuisines. Therefore, Kim Hong comments, "Those restaurants were owned by Chinese but they didn't serve any Chinese food. So I wouldn't call them Chinese restaurants" (Kim Hong 2013).

In their study of ethnic restaurants in Quebec City, Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli ask: "What makes a restaurant ethnic?" (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 252) Their answer - "a restaurant whose signboard or publicity clearly promises the national or regional cuisine of another land" (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 252) - would exclude those Newfoundland's early Chinese-owned restaurants. The Imperial Restaurant, United Nation Café, Silver Ball Café, Good View Restaurant, White Lily Restaurant, London Café, Western Café, People Café, St. John's Café and West End Café (William Ping 1995a) had no Chinese signs and featured western cuisines. Neither would scholars who claim that authenticity - conceptualized as something or a status which is believed or accepted as genuine or real (Taylor 1991, 17) - requires "using the same ingredients and processes as found in the homeland of the ethnic, national, or regional group" (Lu and Fine 1995, 538) consider these restaurants as being "Chinese." Similarly many people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland consider a Chinese

restaurant as a place that serves Chinese food instead of non-Chinese cuisines. However, defining “authentic” Chinese food remains problematic.

The first restaurant in Newfoundland to serve Chinese food is believed to be the Deluxe Café which was located on Water Street in downtown St. John’s (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013, Kim Hong 2013). Kim Hong recalls:

The Chinese-owned restaurants started to serve Chinese food in around 1954 to 1955. At that time, there was a small café called Deluxe Café on Water Street. The Deluxe Café was first owned by Charlie Ding Au. He had a son Wing Ding Au who came to Newfoundland in 1946. Wing Ding went to local high school to learn some English and got his head tax back [\$300]. After Confederation, he went to Toronto with some others to work at a famous Chinese restaurant called Litchi Garden as a waiter. In 1953 or 1954, Wing Ding came back from Toronto and took over the business. He must have learnt how to cook Chinese food from the working experience in Toronto and when he came back, he started to serve Chinese food. (Kim Hong 2013)

Instead of upper-class Chinese delicacies or the everyday meals prepared in Chinese households in St. John’s, the food served at the Deluxe Café could be labelled as “North American style Chinese food.”

In the minds of many older generation Chinese in Newfoundland, the term “North American Chinese food” has a fixed meaning. Kim Hong says, “I think when people talk about North American Chinese food, they refer to some ten items like eggroll, wonton, chop suey, guy ding, sweet and sour chicken and so on” (Kim Hong 2013). The label, “North American Chinese food,” differentiates a type of restaurant food served in North American Chinese restaurants from the foodways of Chinese populated centers such as mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as other overseas communities with a large Chinese population. Many of the Chinese restaurant owners and chefs I spoke to consider the North American Chinese food they prepare for largely non-Chinese customers as not “real” Chinese food but an American creation. For example, Wallace Hong, one of the previous partners of the local Kenmount Restaurant in St.

John's, says: "When my wife and other female relatives first came to Newfoundland, they knew nothing about the food we served here, so some of them asked 'what is this?' 'Chinese food,' I told them. They were surprised to 'discover' a new type of Chinese food. I had to tell them that we 'cheated' customers. That is what you can say about it" (Wallace Hong 2013).

In terms of the differences between the North American style Chinese food and "authentic" Chinese food, Joseph Mo comments, "The North American Chinese food here is different from what I had in Guangdong (Canton). People cook it differently, so the taste is different. Sweet and sour sauce is widely used in various dishes here, but traditionally, Cantonese dishes are delicate and less saucy" (Joseph Mo 2013). Specifically, Wallace Hong explains:

One of the biggest differences between North American Chinese Food and traditional Chinese food is that traditional Chinese food doesn't really mix everything together. We don't do mixed vegetables. When we do beef and broccoli in China, we don't mix them with carrots baby corns and so on as what we do here. We do that here because we try to accommodate the local taste. Also, when we know that local people have more concern about their health, we add more vegetables when we cook chicken guy ding. But normally, when Chinese do guy ding, they would put more chicken than vegetables, which are only used for decoration, or say, adding colours. Another example is chop suey. When we do chop suey in China, in addition to chicken, we use primarily bean sprouts instead of other veggies. But in Newfoundland, you may get everything in your chop suey. I guess that this kind of chop suey was probably first cooked in US and we just copy it. However, the tastes are about the same. Let me tell you more. Sweet and sour pork is the Chinese way to do deep-fried stuff. Traditionally, we dip meat into a mixture of egg white, a little bit flour and starch, and then deep fry, but we don't really use batter. So in this sense, chicken ball, almond soo guy or lemon chicken with heavy batter are not traditionally Chinese style. (Wallace Hong 2013)

In addition to adding more ingredients in some dishes and using a western cooking style to deep-fry, some North American style Chinese dishes are simplified versions of their counterparts in China. Wallace Hong continues:

At the beginning, in Kenmount, we used ingredients like bean sprouts and celery, and sometimes, we mixed chicken or BBQ pork with veggies in our eggrolls, but afterwards, we just tried to make it as simple as possible. Moreover, when we are doing stir-fry in Chinese way, we always cook vegetables first and put them at the bottom of the dish; then, we cook meat and cover it on the top of vegetables. That is the Chinese

presentation. But here in Newfoundland, we normally stir-fry everything together at the same time. (Wallace Hong 2013)

Of course, North American style Chinese food has gained popularity well beyond Newfoundland (see Coe 2009; Jung 2010; Lee 2008; Roberts 2002; Wu and Cheung 2002). For example, “chop suey,” the Cantonese term for odds and ends and the dish synonymous with North American style Chinese food, is popular throughout Canada and the United States (Coe 2009; Jung 2010 and Lee 2008). The restaurants serving this type of food are called “chop suey restaurants” by many Chinese chefs in Newfoundland, especially those working in smaller communities (e.g. Bing Sun Chi 2014, Tommy Tam 2014 and Jackie Tan 2014).

North Americanized Chinese food was the result of a culinary negotiation between Chinese immigrants working in the restaurant sector and their non-Chinese customers. Initially, however, North American style Chinese cooking was not widely accepted in Newfoundland. Kim Hong says:

Wing told me, at that time, it [Deluxe Café] was full with Jewish people. Jewish people were mostly businesspeople and they went everywhere, here or there. They were all exposed to Chinese food so that they liked Chinese food... Local Newfoundland people then were not so well exposed around Chinese food and they tended to order roast beef, pork chop, fish and chips, hot turkey sandwich and others. A lot of Chinese-owned restaurants did serve these types of food. (Kim Hong 2013)

In time, however, this new type of Chinese food became popular in Chinese restaurants across Newfoundland just as it did in other parts of the continent. Kim Hong recalls:

Wing did quite well, and after a number of years, in about 1960, he opened Bamboo Garden restaurant on Harvey Road (now the location is BIS, Benevolent Irish Society). Bamboo Garden had four woks. You must be doing well to keep four woks. And after his success at Bamboo Garden, he sold the place to Gene Hong [who changed the name to House of Hong's] and moved to open Skyline Motel on Kenmount Road. (Kim Hong 2013)

Seeing the success of Wing Ding Au, many Chinese restaurant owners began to add popular North American Chinese items to their menus. In mid-1960s, some big Chinese restaurants began to emerge in St. John's including: the restaurant of the Skyline Motel, House of Hong's and Kenmount Restaurant (Kim Hong 2013). In Newfoundland, Chinese restaurants in general also became more popular across the province. Kim Hong counts:

In 70s and 80s, there were 45 plus restaurants and snack bars owned by Chinese in St. John's area, including Mount Pearl and Paradise. In Newfoundland, the total number should be around 80 to 90 at the peak time. Even the town of Port aux Basques had two, one of which was called National Cafe owned by Peter Hing [who is an Au].²² The other was owned by a Mr. Ho. Stephenville had four or five, Corner Brook had 6-8, Deer Lake had one, Springdale had one, Botwood had one, Grand Falls had about half dozen, Gander always had 3-4, and other places like Carbonear had 1 or 2. (Kim Hong 2013)

Today, North American style Chinese food still dominates the menus of Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. For example, Wallace Hong says: "In Kenmount, we serve Chinese Canadian food, like chop suey, guy ding, beef and broccoli, different kinds of meat with mixed vegetables, chicken ball, and sweet and sour spareribs" (Wallace Hong 2013). Francis Tam, a second-generation Chinese born in Newfoundland, says, "In my grandfather's restaurant, he adopted to local taste and he had regular chicken balls, fried rice, chow mein" (Francis Tam 2013). Kim Hong observes, "80% percent of the sales of many Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland come from those dishes what we call North American Chinese food" (Kim Hong 2013).

The growth of the number of Chinese restaurants indicates that to some extent North American style Chinese foodways, or at least the concept of "Chinese foodways," is widespread in Newfoundland. Although many Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland, especially those in relatively remote and/rural communities still serve a variety of western food, a majority of items in their menus would be defined as "Chinese." The availability of western food is to

²² According to Peter Hing, his restaurant was called Hing's Restaurant.

accommodate some people who are hesitant to try “Chinese food” but would like to come with family and friends who enjoy choosing from the “Chinese” menu. Wallace Hong says: “In our menu, we always keep a selection of western food, like eggs and bacon, pork chop, lamb chop, steak, roast beef, turkey dinner, salmon and cod. We always have customers who prefer to get what they are familiar with” (Wallace Hong 2013). Today, on the menus of some popular restaurants in Newfoundland like Magic Wok Eatery, customers are unable to find any “western food.” Therefore, it is reasonable to say that since the 1950s in Newfoundland Chinese owned restaurants have become “Chinese” restaurants.

In the process of transformation, in addition to the change of food, many newly-emerged Chinese restaurants were actually converted from Chinese-owned restaurants (or non-Chinese restaurants), which used to primarily serve western food. The process of conversion was not easy. Kim Hong reminds, “Don’t forget, when you cook Canadian food, you don’t use woks, but you have to use them when you cook Chinese food. Pans do not work” (Kim Hong 2013). Therefore, a western kitchen needs to be reformed to accommodate Chinese cooking. For example, wok stoves must be installed. In addition to the reconstruction of kitchen, it was also necessary to purchase new cookers and tools like rice cookers, and order Chinese groceries. Moreover, new menus should be printed with newly added Chinese items. All these renovations asked for more financial investment than keeping the routine of serving western food. It is assumable that many Chinese at the time including Wing Ding Au himself might doubt if the transformation was worth it.

Although the North American style Chinese food is different from Chinese foodways in Chinese-populated centers, many Chinese cooks look at it as part of their culinary tradition and historical record that marks how their lives reflect an intermingling of both Chinese and non-

Chinese clients. Many Chinese immigrants, especially those older generation Chinese, accept North American style Chinese food as a “Chinese” culinary tradition in Newfoundland. Billy Hong says, “I love chicken balls and I think they are tasty if you are doing right. I don’t see why it is not Chinese. They are made by Chinese, so they are Chinese. That is my understanding” (Billy Hong 2013).

Many people would notice the similarity of Chinese food in local Chinese restaurants. Kim Hong explains, “Chinese food in different places in Newfoundland and other places in North America is more or less the same because those chefs always work for somebody else first before they start their own business, so they all learn from others. It is fairly easy for people to pick up the techniques of North American style Chinese cooking” (Kim Hong 2013). Francis Tam confirms, “My parents didn’t get a chance to learn how to cook before they came. My father learnt from Tom Chow’s restaurant [Taiwan Restaurant] in Grand Falls and my grandfather’s kitchen [ABC Restaurant in Corner Brook]. When he learnt enough and got enough money, he started his own business. What my father learnt from those places were mostly Chinese Canadian cooking” (Francis Tam 2013). This apprenticeship in local Chinese restaurants is still popular and many current chefs have gained their culinary skills of cooking North American style Chinese food through the same process as their precedents. Rennies So says, “I was trained as a dim sum cook in Hong Kong and knew nothing about Canadian Chinese food. I learned how to cook it in Windsor, Ontario and I also learned from others in Newfoundland” (Rennies So 2009). Likewise, Joseph Mo also says, “I learnt how to make sweet and sour chicken balls in Paul Chong’s Dragon 88” (Joseph Mo 2013).

Sometimes, strict criteria is used by some Chinese restaurant cooks to assess dishes served in local Chinese restaurants and any violation seems not be acceptable. For example, at the

luncheon of the annual Hong's reunion, Wallace Hong made a comment about the guy ding prepared at a local Chinese restaurant. He said, "Shirley [Shirley Hong, the owner of Rice Bowl at the food court of Avalon Mall] told me, 'I have never seen guy ding like this.' I said, 'Yes, I would never make guy ding like that. They were chopped too big and they were actually chicken and mixed vegetables'" (Wallace Hong 2013). Amy Tam actually defines the cooking at this restaurant as "Grand Falls style," which is still popular in the Chinese restaurants in Grand Falls-Windsor and in those Chinese restaurants whose chefs have been working in Grand Falls-Windsor across Newfoundland (Amy Tam 2013).

Amy Tam's statement shows that North American style Chinese food may exhibit local variation. The variation can be attributed to self-innovation and more importantly, intra-ethnic competition. Billy Hong says:

North American style Chinese food was new to me and I actually learnt it from observation. I always watched and copied how people cook, but, in many cases, I adjust the taste based on my own taste because I thought mine was better. However, the learning process was not easy because nobody would teach you. They were afraid of losing their jobs after you learnt. Years ago, when I was a kitchen helper at the 7A restaurant [another early Chinese restaurant on Harvey Road in St. John's], there was a cook who hid his ingredients and sauces all the time. Sometimes I had to order the food to guess how it was cooked. (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013)

Wallace Hong tells a similar story. He says:

I learned from those cooks we hired from Toronto. They didn't teach me anything but I tried my best to learn. At that time, I stayed in the kitchen of Kenmount all the time. I warned my brother: "If all cooks leave us, what could we do if we know nothing?" However, nobody taught you how to cook at that time. Sometimes, they even tried to hide their skills because many of them tried to save their jobs. Gene Hong told me that when he was working in a local Chinese restaurant, there was a guy who was making tofu. This guy kept all secret ingredients in his bedroom and every time when he tried to make some, he would go upstairs to get what he needed and hide things in his pocket when he came down. He just took thing out of his pocket when he was cooking. (Wallace Hong 2013)

The competition strengthened the tradition of North American style Chinese food by generating diversity.

In some cases, North American style Chinese food can be an ethnic marker by which Chineseness is highlighted. Kim Hong says, “In the Chinese New Year celebrations, we served our guests eggrolls, guy ding, fried rice, sweet and sour chicken and honey garlic ribs. I don’t see there is any problem to serve them in this kind of events. I think the food is prepared in a Chinese way and they are actually much better than what I had in the countryside of China” (Kim Hong 2013).

The Private and the Public: Home Cooking and Restaurant Style

My participant observation and interviews with Chinese individuals in St John’s today suggests that their domestic foodways differ from the North American style Chinese food served in restaurants. Wallace Hong says, “We knew how to make dim sums, but we didn’t really serve them in the restaurant because it’s ‘too much trouble.’ A lot of people are needed to make and serve. My wife and I only make them at home for our own use. My wife also makes zongzi [a Chinese sticky rice cake wrapped with lotus leaves], which was normally made in China once a year but we make it here all year round” (Wallace Hong 2013).

The differences between domestic foodways and public commercial culinary practices have been documented by Alison Marshall as a part of “the way of the bachelor” (Marshall 2011a). Marshall defines “the way of the bachelor” as a life pattern of many Chinese immigrants who came to Canada before the adoption of the new Canadian immigration guidelines in 1967. Marshall uses the phrase to describe a strategy adopted by Chinese immigrants who generally behaved like other Canadians in public (e.g. being Christians) but observed their Chinese

traditions (e.g. pagan/heathen practices) in private, following what might have been seen as strange or “unacceptable” by non-Chinese Canadians in private (Marshall 2011a).

Applying Marshall’s insight to foodways, I understand the differences between private and public Chinese foodways as “culinary ambivalence.” The unavailability of Chinese ingredients as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is a plausible explanation of Chinese culinary ambivalence in Newfoundland. Billy Hong says, “I didn’t do traditional Chinese food in my restaurant because I couldn’t get enough ingredients. Traditional Chinese dishes heavily rely on local goods in China and many ingredients were not available in Newfoundland. Therefore, we had to use local groceries to replace them” (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013). Wallace Hong also recalls, “At that time, you couldn’t even get broccoli in St. John’s back in 1960s. I am not talking about Chinese broccoli but just western broccoli. You could only get cabbages and carrots all year round. If you were lucky, sometimes you would get some celery. A lot of Chinese ingredients, like green onions, noodles and Chinese cabbages, were sent in from Montreal. You couldn’t get wonton wrappers and eggroll wrappers locally either. You had to order almost everything from Montreal” (Wallace Hong 2013).

In addition to the inaccessibility to Chinese ingredients, a lack of qualified cooks contributed to the scarcity of non-North American style Chinese food in Chinese restaurants of Newfoundland. Kim Hong says, “I guess at the time, a lot of people who came to Newfoundland were from poor countryside in China, so I don’t think that they were familiar with those fancy dishes served in high class restaurants in big cities. That was why those early cooks wouldn’t know how to make traditional upper-class Chinese food. In many cases, this high class style is often regarded as more authentic Chinese cooking” (Kim Hong 2013). As a matter of fact, some Chinese people who had been working in the restaurant business were not trained as cooks

before they came to Newfoundland so that they had limited knowledge at cooking techniques. For example, Billy Hong explains, “I was born in a rich family in China and I didn’t need to cook by myself because everything was prepared by servants. Also, in Chinese tradition, at least in my hometown, men didn’t have to do any cooking at home because that was women’s job. When I went to Hong Kong in around 1950, I was an accountant and I was always dining out. I didn’t know how to cook before I started my career as chef in Newfoundland” (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013). Chan Chau Tam also says, “Before I came to Newfoundland, I knew little about cooking. I actually learned here in my uncle [his aunt’s husband]’s restaurant [in Goulds, a small neighborhood in St. John’s]. At the time, when I was working at the St. John’s Hotel, the head chef was also a Chinese from Hong Kong. He told me that he was not trained as a cook before he came, either. At the time, we did really simple stuff like sweet and sour chicken and chicken fried rice. It was quite easy to pick up” (Chan Chau Tam 2013).

Some Chinese individuals who were involved in the restaurant business in the early days were professionally trained. Ted Hong, the current owner of the Kenmount Restaurant was one of these well-trained cooks. As Wallace Hong says, “My nephew Ted went to Hong Kong to learn for a few months with a famous cook Chan Wing at his cooking class in 1963. He also went to North Bay, Ontario, to work in a Chinese restaurant for a while. Ted is really good at making BBQ duck and other traditional Cantonese BBQ stuff like crispy chicken and BBQ pork. My wife said that Ted could do BBQ duck better than anyone. In addition to Ted, we also hired some experienced cooks from Toronto when we first opened” (Wallace Hong 2013). Few of these non-North American style Chinese dishes were included in the menu of Kenmount Restaurant because of, according to Wallace Hong, the culinary orientation of local customers. In

recent years, as Jackie Tan says, “You have to provide a chef certification to the immigration officer to get your work permit in Canada” (Jackie Tan 2014).

In addition to the lack of ingredients and qualified chefs, the emergence of culinary ambivalence is attributed by many scholars to non-Chinese residents’ fears of unclean or “contaminated” materials in traditional Chinese cooking and unfamiliar dining customs. An example is an article published on March 4, 1914, titled “Canton, China.” Written by George Fitch, the author of *At Good Old Siwash*, it appeared in the *Evening Telegram*, St John’s major local newspaper. Fitch writes with tongue in cheek: “Canton people are very hospitable when approached properly and offer the visitor such delicacies as fried dog, stewed cat, boiled owls, pickled rats, smoked boa-constrictor and birds nest soup. On account of this hospitality, Americans do not much visit much in Canton [sic].” Although Fitch’s intent is undoubtedly humorous, he reflects reservations that were widespread in North America at the time. Fear of being served “inedible” “Chinese” food not only stopped Americans from traveling to China, particularly to the Canton province, but also prevented them from tasting traditional Chinese food (Coe 2009 and Lee 2008).

George Fitch’s story is not an isolated example, but links to a whole urban legend cycle with many variants. Some of these have been well investigated by folklorists (e.g. Buchan 1992, Hobbs 1966, Klintberg 1981, Shorrocks 1975, 1980; Smith 1986, de Vos 1996). As a result of widely circulating urban legends, Chinese food falls into the category of “disgust” according to Michael Owen Jones (2000b). Although many legends have been proven untrue, at times particular Chinese restaurant businesses have been seriously affected. In this context, arguably Americanized Chinese food arose as part of an economic strategy on the part of Chinese restaurant owners, especially those in areas where the local white population made up their

customer base. They chose to modify their dishes to meet the tastes of their customers. They adjusted their culinary tradition “to make the unfamiliar seem sufficiently comfortable, thus making the exotic qualities of the food pleasurable” (Lu and Fine 1995, 541).

As mentioned earlier, in the early days, some non-Chinese Newfoundlanders like Charlie Snook, experienced Chinese foodways through their interactions with local Chinese immigrants. Because of his personal connection to Chinese residents and his positive memory of the taste of Chinese food, Charlie Snook became one of the early Chinese restaurant’s patrons. He remembers:

In 1950s, there was a Chinese restaurant on Water Street called Deluxe Cafe and we always went there. In that restaurant, we ordered Moo Gu Guy Pian [mushrooms and chicken], sweet and sour chicken, oh, and, garlic ribs, and, of course, steamed white rice. Each dish like Moo Gu Guy Pian would cost you 50 cents to a dollar... When we went to a Chinese restaurant, we eat Chinese food. But at that time, they did sell western food. We also went to some other Chinese restaurants like the one on New Gower Street and the Avalon Grill and Bar (owned by Charlie Hong) on Duckworth Street. When I was doing sales representative and travelling across the province, I also went to different Chinese restaurants in other communities like Grand Falls and Corner Brook. (Charlie Snook 2014)

However, unlike Snook, many people in Newfoundland did not have Chinese friends or previous experience of eating Chinese food. They were very reluctant to try this new cuisine that they were not familiar with. Still today, some Chinese who are working in the restaurant business feel that many Newfoundlanders are unwilling to try things new to them. Joseph Mo comments, “I find that locals are conservative to try new stuff. If nobody introduces new dishes to them, they would never want to try. I guess that health and food safety are big concerns to them” (Joseph Mo 2013). Chien Ming Yeh also states, “Unlike Chinese who are always ready to try different things, it would take a very long time for local people to accept new tastes. They would try to know every detail of the food before they try and they tend to be more affected by other people’s opinions” (Chien Ming Yeh 2013). Based on her own interaction with a

Newfoundlander, Lili Wang also feels that some Newfoundlanders are very conservative in concerning their food consumption even if they have frequent daily interaction with Chinese persons. She says:

My son Billy has a good friend who always comes to our house to visit him. Every time, I would prepare some snacks for them, like chips and chocolate bars. One day, when he came over, because we just came back from a vacation and didn't have any finger food in stock, so I went to the kitchen and brought out some Chinese snacks and pastries. However, my son's friend didn't even want to try and he told me that he wouldn't like it. I was surprised how people knew that they wouldn't like it before they had a little bite. (Lili Wang 2012)

It seems that acceptance of Chinese food in Newfoundland was first due to increased knowledge about Chinese food. This knowledge was either gained by Newfoundlanders who started to travel to outside of Newfoundland more frequently, or was brought in by people who came to Newfoundland to visit or work from places where Chinese food was more accessible.

Kim Hong recalls:

Local people started to try Chinese food probably in the late 50s or early 60s. I guess, one of the reasons might be that, after Confederation, people travelled a little bit more. At that time, travelling by plane was also more popular. Another important reason might be the increase of people's income which allowed them to spend more. In addition, a lot of people from mainland Canada came to Newfoundland to work for the government, university or various projects. A lot of them had been exposed to Chinese food before they came, so they might educate their colleagues about Chinese food. (Kim Hong 2013)

At the same time, Chinese restaurants started to actively advertise themselves. Some restaurant owners offered to let customers sample their food for free of charge. Lam Hong says, "At the beginning, local people didn't want to try Chinese food. I encouraged them, 'You try first. If you don't like it, I won't charge you any money.' Then they tried and they came to like the food. After that they came to my place to order Chinese food all the time" (Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013). In more recent years, the Chinese Association attempted to promote Chinese foodways to the general public of Newfoundland. In 1997, a "Chinese Food Festival" held at the

then Fairmont Hotel (the location is now the Sheraton Hotel), was organized by Alick Tsui, then president of Chinese Association. Alick Tsui recalls:

With the support of a grant, I asked all major Chinese restaurants in St. John's area to prepare some signature dishes for the festival and told them that the association would purchase the food at full price. A lot of restaurant people liked it and around 15 to 20 restaurants participated into this event. I remembered that Magic Wok provided different kinds of dim sum and Rennies So was showing people how to do a lobster salad on the site. Because of the grant, I charged only \$2 for sampling. The main purpose of the festival was to promote Chinese food and local Chinese restaurants. (Alick Tsui 2012)

For many Newfoundlanders, eating Chinese food at certain Chinese restaurants has become an inseparable part of their everyday life and/or a treat for special occasions. Billy Hong recalls:

One Sunday, I guess that was in 1971 when we just opened the Hong's Takeout, we went to the flower service in the morning. When we came back, we found that our parking lot was full of people who were waiting outside. It was an hour prior to the open time, but people began to line up. After I retired in early 2000s, sometimes I meet my regular customers in the city when I am out for shopping or recreation. One day, a former customer told me that he still remembered that, years ago, when his son, who had moved to Calgary, called home or visited Newfoundland, he often asked his son if he wanted to eat anything locally. The young man always said, "Please go to Hong's Takeout to get me some treats." Another customer told me that, after we closed down the business, they had never tried Chinese food anymore. He told me, "We don't like their taste. You are the best." (Billy Hong 2013)

In respect to the "Chinese Food Festival," Alick Tsui complains that, "In my opinion, the 'Chinese Food Festival' was not as successful as what I expected. It was good but people did not follow my instruction. People just did the thing in their ways. It was not supposed to be a buffet but food sampling as the way Costco did. However, some people took too much, so a lot of people had to wait, but the food couldn't come quickly" (Alick Tsui 2012). Perhaps Tsui's complaint is a good one because it indicates that the Newfoundlanders were enthusiastic about Chinese food. Today, Magic Wok Eatery might be the most popular Chinese restaurant in St. John's. Rennies So says, "In recent years, we always close the restaurant for Chinese New Year, so when the Chinese New Year season is close, a lot of customers would call us to check the

dates because many of them want to make a dinner plan in my restaurant before we leave. When we reopen after the holiday, it is usually super busy because a lot of people are eager to the good taste” (Rennies So 2009).

In addition to the abovementioned reasons for the limited selection of non-North American Chinese food in local Chinese restaurants, lack of support from local Chinese groups for local restaurants might be another reason. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the majority of Chinese in Newfoundland were involved in the restaurant business and many of these Chinese restaurants were open seven days a week (George Au 2014, Billy Hong and Lam Hong 2013, Chan Chau Tam 2012). If early restaurant owners and employees visited other Chinese eating establishments, it was more likely for social reasons rather than the pursuit of culinary treats. Not surprising then, it was not until the 1970s when the numbers of Chinese professionals and students increased, that Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland started to offer choices beyond the North Americanized selections. In order to accommodate the requests of customers for non-North American style Chinese food, the Kenmount Restaurant was the first in St John’s to provide some alternatives.

Wallace Hong says:

We didn’t have too many traditional Chinese options in the menu and we only had Cantonese chow mein and some hot noodle soups, which were more Chinese than other dishes. In the noodle soup, we put some crab meat, vegetable and egg white for Chinese customers. We sold a lot of this kind of soup. Sometimes, customers could also order BBQ duck, but they had to order one or two days in advance. At that time, we had some students from Taiwan who often came to the restaurant to ask for traditional Chinese food. They didn’t normally order from our menu because they said that the dishes in the menu were too Canadian. In those cases, we just followed their orders and cooked what they wanted. (Wallace Hong 2013)

May Soo also reflects how Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland began to present more non-North American style Chinese cuisines, which, although, were often served in a more individual or private setting. She recalls:

My step-grandmother, my grandfather's Newfoundland wife did not eat Chinese food so my grandfather would drive twice daily from the Globe cafe in Windsor to the Taiwan restaurant in Grand Falls to eat his daily meals, because we had Chinese cooks who cooked authentic Chinese meals. He did this every day until his death in 1996. Some of his favorite traditional dishes included steamed shrimp paste over sliced pork, slow simmered herbal soups, steamed black bean ribs, steamed whole fish with garlic and ginger and various types of vegetable stir fries always with plain steam rice to name a few. (May Soo 2013)

In recent years, the growing number of Chinese immigrants and students, the increased social interaction between Chinese and non-Chinese residents of the city and the exposure of more international cuisines through various sources such as cookbooks and online information, has led to a recognition among the general public of Newfoundland of Chinese food beyond the North Americanized standards. As Francis Tam observes, “Nowadays, Newfoundlanders’ knowledge of Asian culture has grown and many people know Asian foods. Hence, a variety of food is available to eat in Newfoundland. Certain restaurants in Newfoundland provide different dishes although it is still less variety than in bigger cities on the mainland [Canada]” (Francis Tam 2013).

The Negotiation of Culinary Traditions: the Emergence of “Traditional Dishes”

The enhanced understanding of Chinese foodways encouraged some local Chinese restaurants to diversify beyond North American style Chinese food. Chan Chau Tam, the previous owner of the China House Restaurant in St. John’s, says proudly, “I was the first one who introduced Singapore-style vermicelli, hot and sour soup and some other Szechuan dishes to the customers in St. John’s” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Francis Tam also says:

My father went to Grand Falls to open up his own restaurant in around 1989. In this restaurant, the food was similar to what my grandfather’s restaurant had but my dad expended a little bit. He wanted to add some Cantonese or Szechuan dishes on his menu. He wanted to do those hot plate dishes like Mongolian beef and Sa Cha beef or chicken, and he also wanted to do Cantonese chow mein and Singapore noodles. At that

time, they wanted to show locals that there were more in Chinese food than the normal Canadian Chinese version. They wanted to show the culture. (Francis Tam 2013)

With the growing demand, several well-trained Chinese chefs including Allan Lau (the owner of the current Hong Kong Restaurant), Paul Chong (who operated the Dragon 88 Restaurant at Conception Bay South, a town in St. John's Metropolitan area) and Jimmy Tam (owner of the Mei Mae Wok restaurant in St. John's) were also recruited to work in local restaurants, such as the Jade Garden Restaurant (see Figure 18) in St. John's (May Soo [former owner's daughter] 2013). At the time, Rennie So also joined Jade Garden and worked in the kitchen. So says, "When I was in Ontario, I heard that some Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland were hiring chefs. I thought I was pretty good, so I came" (Rennie So 2009). New dishes in Szechuan and Cantonese styles such as Hong Kong shrimp balls, spicy Szechuan chicken and seafood in bird's nest were introduced on the menus of local Chinese restaurants. Previously prepared only in the private sphere or embodied as memories in the minds of immigrants, they emerged into the public space where they made a place for themselves on city menus beside the North American style Chinese food.



Figure 18: The Opening of Jade Garden Restaurant in 1982, St. John's. Courtesy of May Soo.

Many of the younger Chinese cooks and new immigrants I spoke with consider North American style Chinese food to be inauthentic. They feel that the popularity of dishes such as chop suey and sweet and sour chicken balls has contributed to a misconception of Chinese food and Chineseness²³ among non-Chinese patrons. Many of them therefore attempt to rebuild the image of Chinese culinary tradition in North America by promoting what they understand as “real” Chinese food, which is different from the North American style Chinese food and people’s home cooking. These dishes are advertised as “traditional” because they bear traditional names of dishes popular in China and incorporate newly imported sauces. The previously mentioned local adaptations of Cantonese or Szechuan cooking styles are examples of this current movement. In some popular restaurants like Magic Wok, these dishes are separately listed on the

²³ There is always intense competition among different Chinese restaurants, however cooperation is more noticeable. Many Chinese restaurant owners are closely connected by either kinship or region of birth. Many owners have regular get-togethers (frequently once a week). In addition, Chinese restaurants in St. John’s are scattered in different part of the City and many of them feature different styles of food (Cantonese style, Szechuan style, Hokkien style or Northern style) and services (dining – ordering or buffet, take-out or delivery). In this chapter, I do not attempt to present economic competitions among local Chinese restaurants. The comments on authenticity should not be considered as strategies for commercial competition.

menu. Different sections exist for “North American style Chinese food” and “traditional Chinese food.” Magic Wok Eatery also offers customers traditional 12- course Cantonese style banquets for events such as weddings, graduations, birthdays and other special occasions. For example, the Magic Wok’s traditional Chinese “Birthday Dinner” includes seafood soup 龙王凤白海鲜羹, deep fried stuffed crab-claws 炸酿蟹钳, stir-fried seasonal vegetable with shrimps and scallops 金龙玉带, braised Chinese mushrooms, dry scallops and broccolis 瑶柱鲜菇西兰花, steamed shrimp balls 碧玉明珠, deep fried whole fish with touch of house sweet and sour sauce 港式五柳鱼, crispy BBQ duck 脆皮烧鸭, steamed lobster and vermicelli with garlic flavor 银丝蒜香蒸双龙虾, braised noodle with oyster sauce 长寿伊面, fried rice with diced chicken and scallops 万寿无疆炒饭, steamed birthday buns 绿叶伴寿桃 and seasonal fruit platter 合时生果拼盘.

However, some chefs and diners argue that many of the so-called traditional dishes are still different from how they are prepared in China. For example, Joseph Mo comments, “I think some of those new so-called traditional Chinese dishes are still in North American style because their remarkable differences from the food in China. These new dishes are still modified to cater to locals, although they might look more like the food in China than traditional North American Chinese food. Some of them even adopt the names of traditional Chinese dishes like Kung Pao chicken 宫保鸡丁 and Peking duck 北京烤鸭. However, they are still very non-Chinese in terms of ingredients, presentation and taste” (Joseph Mo 2013). In commenting on a local Chinese restaurant whose chefs introduced some Szechuan dishes to their menu, Mo says, “These chefs

were not really trained how to do Szechuan dishes. How could they serve this type of dishes?” (Joseph Mo 2013).

On the basis of my fieldwork, many chefs (I would say more than ninety percent) of local Chinese restaurants are from Hong Kong or surrounding areas like Canton (Guangdong) or Macau in the Chinese southern coastal part, which is thousands of miles away from Szechuan and Beijing. In addition, many of them were trained as dim sum chefs or regular cooks rather than Peking duck artists. Many of the cooks who adopted new styles, Szechuan style in particular, were not very familiar with that cooking tradition; it would be very difficult for some of them to prepare traditional dishes. Chan Chau Tam says, “I actually learned how to cook Szechuan-style dishes from cookbooks. At the time, a lot of people called me a ‘cookbook chef’” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Leon Chung says, “My dad went back to China to learn cooking of Szechuan food from some cooking masters, but he didn’t stay with them long enough to experience more” (Leon Chuang 2012). That is to say, chefs are claiming authority over a culinary practice that is not their own.

This example raises the issue of “cultural appropriation” that “occurs across the boundaries of cultures” (Young 2008, 5). James O. Young explains, “Members of one culture (I will call them outsiders) take for their own or for their own use, items produced by a member or members of another culture (call them insiders)” (Young 2008, 5). In the case of Peking duck, Cantonese chefs appropriate the dish from a Northern culinary system and present it for commercial purposes. The appropriation itself, although it might not involve any tangible objects such as ingredients, tools and the like, does borrow the cultural knowledge and therefore falls into the rubric of “appropriation of traditional knowledge” (Bannister, Solomon and Brunk 2009). Michael Brown defines “the complexity and moral ambiguity of the kinds of borrowing and

imitation” as “interculture play” (Brown 2003, 251). Because of the lack of insider’s knowledge, culinary authenticity is not easily achieved.

Chien Ming Yeh, owner of the Formosa Tea House in St. John’s and an active Chinese cultural promoter, criticizes some local Chinese restaurants as misleading:

I feel that many Chinese restaurants do not intend to introduce our real culture to local people. The only goal of them would be making money instead of promoting our tradition. I think we have the responsibility to educate local people about our culture. In nowadays, things that we present to non-Chinese people, such as Chinese food or broadly speaking, Chinese traditional art, are only physical forms of our culture instead of the core of the tradition. In my understanding, the core of the culture is more spiritual. Confucius thoughts and other philosophical principles represent the core of Chineseness. In terms of cooking, I think we should follow our “real” tradition to prepare meals for our customers. For example, we should show local people what the traditional Chinese fried rice supposes to be instead of “cheating” or “misrepresenting.” The process may be slow because the older generation has loaded many misleading ideas on the locals, but it is our turn to right the wrong. (Chien Ming Yeh 2013)

Some Chinese chefs call for a more “authentic” presentation of Chinese foodways in Newfoundland. For example, Joseph Mo says:

One day, if I have my own restaurant, I won’t follow the traditional North American style Chinese food. Instead, I will pick up the cooking style in China to present my own idea of Chinese food and Chinese restaurant. I will decorate my restaurant in traditional Chinese designs to introduce Chinese culture to my customers. In addition, I will celebrate traditional Chinese festivals with my customers. Last but not least, chopsticks will be served on the table in my restaurant. (Joseph Mo 2013)

Mo tells me that he plans to adopt a Cantonese style cooking in his restaurant in the future because he is trained as a Cantonese cook.

The quest for “authenticity” has already begun in some Chinese restaurants. Chien Ming Yeh says:

In my restaurant, as you can see, instead of western cutleries, I set chopsticks. I use all oriental dishes and my restaurant is all decorated with traditional Chinese paintings, calligraphies and Buddhism sculptures. The mission of my restaurant is not only doing business, but also introducing culture. I intend to promote our oriental cultures which have been existed for more than 5,000 years, I mean, the traditional Chinese culture and

the native culture of Taiwan to local people, who may know little about it. (Chien Ming Yeh 2013)



Figure 19: Formosa Tea House. Courtesy of Chien Ming Yeh.

Yeh's tea house (see Figure 19) has become a popular culinary destination in St. John's for both Chinese and non-Chinese diners and he attributes his success to his insistence on presenting Taiwanese tastes. However, for chefs like Yeh, differences between Chinese food in China and in North America, especially in Newfoundland, are due to the same reasons as in the old days. Often changes can be attributed to factors such as a lack of ingredients. Chien Ming Yeh admits, "No, I can't guarantee everything people get here is the same as what people can get in Taiwan because I have to replace some ingredients with local materials" (Chien Ming Yeh 2013).

Nowadays, many Chinese restaurants in the province still rely heavily on a bi-weekly delivery of goods shipped in from Toronto (Rennies So 2009). More importantly, local taste and the commercial consequence are still the foremost concerns of the business owners who alter the original flavors and ingredients of certain dishes to adapt to local palates. Francis Tam says, "My dad asked his relatives in China how to cook Szechuan food. Those dishes might not be exactly the same as those in China because my dad had to replace some Chinese ingredients with local groceries and the local taste is of the most concern" (Francis Tam 2013).

Scholars Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine criticize efforts to return to earlier foodways: "The maintenance of a food pattern does not depend on whether it is identical with an original model but on whether the 'fundamental' characteristics of the food are defined as being continuously

present, connected to core cultural beliefs, and recognized as a differentiated food pattern” (Lu and Fine 1995, 539). Anne Kaplan, in the same vein, asserts that “It is sentimental fallacy that change is an enemy of tradition... people... constantly alter traditions to fit their lives; a static tradition is ... a dead one” (Kaplan 1986, 3). More importantly, authenticity always lies in “its perception in the public mind” (Shelton 1990).

In not recognizing North American Chinese food as real “Chinese,” the young chefs choose to forget the role these dishes played in preparing customers for the emergence of what the cooks define as more “traditional Chinese food.” Dishes such as Peking Duck, Kung Pao Chicken and sweet and sour pork 咕嚕肉, that are shared by menus of Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland and those in larger Chinese centers, provide customers, particularly Chinese customers, with a foundation from which to discuss their perceptions of Chinese food. In the negotiation, they may be able to ask for the more “authentic” or “traditional” presentation. Based on my observation at the Magic Wok Eatery, both Chinese customers and those non-Chinese customers who have been exposed to foodways in China are more apt to request how they want their food to be prepared. For example, when they order Ma Po Tofu, they might ask for Chinese cabbage instead of mixed vegetables and they might also request to have Chinese pepper in the dish. Therefore the transformation of Chinese food also alters the functions of Chinese restaurants as places that “assist the customer to relate and interpret what is presented to him and to appreciate the novelty in a different cuisine,” (Rosenberg 1990) or places “in which customers can encounter the other, while not straying too far from their own tastes” (Lu and Fine 1995, 348).

The Architecture of Chinese Restaurants and Culinary Authenticity

Lily Cho, writing of western Canada, argues, “Of course, a restaurant is more than the food that it serves – it has an architecture; it is a gathering space; it is the kitchen and dining area and the swinging doors which contact the two; it is the menu and the space of the counter” (Cho 2010, 14). In addition to presenting Chinese dishes, some Chinese restaurants also promote their exoticism and/or authenticity through their decorations with various Chinese symbols which were rarely seen in early Chinese restaurants. The decor of most Chinese-owned restaurants (serving western food) conformed to a western cafeteria style which featured very few Chinese motifs (see Figure 20 and 21). Francis Tam says, “In those days, Chinese were always looking for a business which was ready and established. They might do a little bit renovation to reach the standards but they tried to open their business immediately and bring customers as soon as possible. It was always business the first and culture the second” (Francis Tam 2013).



Figure 20: The Building of the Seven Seas Restaurant in Corner Brook (western cafeteria style).



Figure 21: Helen's Restaurant in Badgar (western cafeteria style).

In the 1970s, Chinese-themed decorations became popular in the Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. The pagoda-style building and elaborate interior decor made the Kenmount Restaurant stand out among other Chinese restaurants (see Figure 22, 23 and 24). Wallace Hong recalls:

The pagoda style restaurant building was the result of our second renovation in 1971. We made it like this because it is a Chinese restaurant and we wanted to introduce some Chinese elements to make the outlook different. All those green tiles were ordered from Hong Kong. Ted [Hong] was the designer for this renovation. Inside the restaurant, we had Chinese lanterns hanged in the dining rooms: a big one in the center and some smaller ones on the side in each room. The screen wall with carved dragons and phonics was also ordered from Hong Kong. It was a fashion at the time. (Wallace Hong 2013)



Figure 22: Kenmount Restaurant (exterior), St. John's.



Figure 23: Kenmount Restaurant (The Gate at the Dining Room), St. John's.



Figure 24: Kenmount Restaurant (Ceiling), St. John's.

Francis Tam comments, “You can tell how nice the restaurant looked when it was brand new. I think the older generation wanted to establish an image to the locals: ‘This is Asian and this is who we are.’” (Francis Tam 2013) In 2006 when Karl Wells, a local food critic, arrived at the Kenmount, he was struck by how the outside looked a little worn:

The brick structure with pagoda-style roof looked like it was in need of a little freshening. Wear and tear was showing under the eaves, calling for some repairs and a new coat of paint. Inside, apart from some fading here and there, the Kenmount Restaurant looked much the same as it did 30 years ago. At the threshold of the dining room, the beautiful, ornately carved arch that contained Chinese symbols and characters made an impression. It was brilliantly coloured in red, gold, blue, green and orange. An angry dragon appeared on one side of the arch while an elaborately feathered bird adorned the other. (*The Telegram* August 1, 2006)

In 2011, a Kenmount Restaurant goer was attracted by the classic look. They posted on Tripadvisor.ca: “[T]he whole place reminds me of a 1920s-1930s Asian restaurant. I like it” (Redrosetea, February 26, 2011).

The only other St. John’s’ Chinese eating establishment that had an exterior similar to the Kenmount, was the Jade Garden Restaurant (later the Taiwan Restaurant) (see Figure 25, 26 and 27). Although it has been closed for a few years and the whole place has been rebuilt as business suites, the Jade Garden/Taiwan was a long-standing Chinese restaurant in the city. The previous Jade Garden/Taiwan Restaurant was built in an oriental style with two marble lions in front of the main door, which is a typical setting in traditional Chinese restaurants in China. May Soo says:

All the decorations of the restaurant were purchased in Taiwan. When I closed down the restaurant in December 2008, I kept a few sentimental pieces from the restaurant like 2 giant wall hangings, a detailed rosewood divider and my slate copper water fountain. Equipment was sold to existing restaurant owners and future restaurant owners. I also sold small stuff to customers. For example, I sold the two lions to a regular customer who liked them very much. What wasn’t sold was donated to relatives who owned restaurants. (May Soo 2013)



Figure 25: Jade Garden Restaurant. Courtesy of May Soo.



Figure 26: Taiwan Restaurant, St. John's (Exterior). Courtesy of May Soo.



Figure 27: Taiwan Restaurant in St. John's (Interior). Courtesy of May Soo.

Although a majority of Chinese restaurants in St. John's and elsewhere in Newfoundland do not adopt the traditional Chinese exterior architectural style, they all more or less attempt to market their Chineseness inside of their restaurants. Jackie Tan says, "I am a Chinese so I want my restaurant to look Chinese" (Jackie Tan 2014) (see Figure 28, 29 and 30). More importantly, Kim Hong says, "If you want to sell Chinese food, you would decorate your restaurant in a Chinese atmosphere" (Kim Hong 2013). Francis Tam notices the changes of the Chinese restaurants where he grew up: "There were no Chinese characters in the menu of my grandfather's restaurant and the Chinese characters were only on the cover of my father's. However, there was more of a Chinese motif in my father's restaurant (see Figure 31, King City Restaurant in Grand Falls-Windsor), like paintings, wallpaper murals, Chinese lanterns and other Chinese decorations. It was more like a Chinese restaurant" (Francis Tam 2013).



Figure 28: Jackie Tan Restaurant's Dining Room, Corner Brook.



Figure 29: Jackie Tan Restaurant's Cash Counter, Corner Brook.



Figure 30: Dragon and Phoenix Gate of Jackie Tan Restaurant, Corner Brook.



Figure 31: King City Restaurant's Dining Room, Grand Falls-Windsor. Courtesy of Amy Tam.

In the days Tam is describing, there were few Chinese restaurants without oriental ornaments to present their cultural identity. The most common feature of Chinese restaurants were Chinese lanterns, paintings and Chinese characters which were not only written on the sign and printed in the menu, but also displayed in the form of calligraphic scrolls hung on the wall. In terms of the role of these Chinese motifs, Francis Tam comments, “There were more Asian

decorations in those old Chinese restaurants back to the 80s and in smaller communities in Newfoundland. The reason was that those restaurant owners not only intended to sell the food, but also the culture to the locals. They wanted to make the restaurant more authentic so that the locals could recognize it” (Francis Tam 2013).

At present, many people may be also aware of the fact that contemporary Chinese restaurants, especially those in St. John’s such as Magic Wok Eatery (see Figure 32) and City Light Restaurant (see Figure 33) in St. John’s and Uncle Li’s Restaurant (see Figure 34) in Clarenville, highlight their Chineseness in a limited way. I term this the “contemporary style.” However, many Chinese restaurants in smaller communities such as Dragon Restaurant (see Figure 35), Jackie Tan Restaurant and Jiwen Garden Restaurant (see Figure 36) in Corner Brook, Taiwan Restaurant (see Figure 37) in Grand Falls-Windsor, East Ocean Restaurant (see Figure 38) and Highlight Restaurant (see Figure 39) in Gander and Tai Hong Restaurant (see Figure 40) in Clarenville, still maintain the older more ornamental style. Francis Tam comments:

In 2013, you might want a more modern restaurant. And you want a more professional image. In the 70s, 80s, 90s or early 2000, you know, a lot of decoration, a lot of oriental ornaments and different designs, give you an illusion of a Chinese motif, this stuff also sometimes cheapens or makes the restaurants look unprofessional. If you are able to take a time machine to go back to the decors of 70s, 80s, and look at what the motifs and designs look like, you can almost do the research of the evolution of Chinese restaurants and how they modernize themselves. Newer Chinese restaurants are pretty modern. They almost look like western restaurants and look more professional, although some still look old, tacky and more Chinese (Francis Tam 2013).



Figure 32: Magic Wok Eatery, St. John's (contemporary style).



Figure 33: City Light Buffet, St. John's (contemporary style).



Figure 34: Uncle Li's Restaurant, Clarendville (contemporary style).



Figure 35: Cash Counter of the Dragon Restaurant, Corner Brook.



Figure 36: Jiwen Garden, Corner Brook.



Figure 37: Taiwan Restaurant, Grand Falls-Windsor.



Figure 38: East Ocean Restaurant, Gander.



Figure 39: Highlight Restaurant, Gander.



Figure 40: Tai Hong Restaurant, Clarenville.

Experiencing the process of the modernization of Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland, Joseph

Mo looks at the changes dialectically:

Indeed, the old-fashioned Chinese restaurants are more “Chinese.” In those restaurants, you can easily find Chinese motifs like dragons and phoenixes. All these restaurants are so-called “antiques” in the mind of many new generation owners of Chinese restaurants because these motifs present an old fashion to them. In earlier days, bowls with the image of rooster were commonly used in those restaurants, but you don’t see any in today’s new restaurants like Magic Wok. It is true that every generation has its own features. Those old-fashioned traits can still be seen in some rural parts of China and many Chinese old timers actually came from those places. Therefore, they brought these things to present themselves and the culture that they belong to. Modern Chinese people are very westernized and culturally flexible to adapt new ideas. In my opinion, that is no problem because people are doing business and they have to change. However, I would say that the change might be negative because people lose their identity and their own cultural uniqueness. (Joseph Mo 2013)

No matter how the appearance of Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland is changed and whether traditional or modern “Chineseness” is presented, it is clear that these places are not merely spaces for food serving and consuming, but as Turgeon and Pastinelli write, “microspaces

allowing for intercultural contact, deterritorialized places where diners can see and touch, even consume the culture of the other on home ground” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 251).

Westerners’ visits to Chinese restaurants fall in to the rubric of culinary tourism as what Lucy M. Long defines:

Culinary tourism is about food as a subject and medium, destination and vehicle, for tourism. It is about individuals exploring foods new to them as well as using food to explore new cultures and ways of being. It is about groups using food to ‘sell’ their histories and to construct marketable and publicly attractive identities, and it is about individuals satisfying curiosity. Finally, it is about the experiencing of food in a mode that is out of the ordinary, that steps outside the normal routine to notice difference and the power of food to represent and negotiate that difference. (Long 2003, 20)

Motz continues, “Unlike tourists in the traditional sense, culinary tourists can explore the exotic without leaving their own neighborhood. Ethnic restaurants are one of an increasing number of arenas in which people can engage in touristic practices within their own culture and as part of their everyday life” (Motz 2003, 53-54). According to these definitions, “culinary tourism” makes ethnic tourism localized (Grabum 1983, 25; Jacobs 2001, 310). When customers from other ethnic communities decide to dine in a restaurant outside of their own group, they actually start their journey to another culture and transform themselves into tourists even if they live in the neighborhood of that particular restaurant.

Further Discussion on Culinary Authenticity

In St John’s, Chinese foodways are defined differently based on the participants’ own knowledge and experiences. Similar to the concept of tradition as mutable and contingent (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984), and often “understood as a process of cultural construction,” (Glassie 2003, 179), authenticity is also a “locally constructed folk idea” (Lu and Fine 1995, 538). In many cases, the judgment of whether a dish is authentically Chinese is based on neither

its taste nor cooking style but on pre-existing concepts of authenticity and power. These concepts are constructed during interactions among members of different cultural groups who vie for the authority to define “authenticity.” Lily Cho contends: “As I have argued elsewhere, ‘Diasporic are not just there. They are not simply collections of people, communities of scattered individuals bound by some shared history, race or religion... Rather, they have a relation to power. They emerge in relation to power’” (Cho 2007, 15). Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland serve as a forum where different groups discuss, negotiate, create, recreate and renegotiate what they believe to be authentic Chinese food. Authenticity thus becomes a technical strategy to separate “us” and “others,” and more thoughtfully, becomes a resource reserved for Chinese, who, through identifying authentic Chinese food, obtain the power to negotiate Chineseness. In fact, Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine see that “neither type of restaurant, whether consumption- or connoisseur-oriented, has authenticity as its primary goal. Tradition as such is not the primary object of concern for social actors” (Lu and Fine 1995, 547). Lily Cho’s analysis clearly reflects this idea:

What that Chineseness is, whether or not it is an accurate or authentic reflection of Chinese culture, is not the point. It is the very openness to interpretation, the very fact that these restaurants do not offer a static and authorial claim to Chineseness, that renders them as such fine counterpublic spaces. They do not constitute a republic of difference, but rather a counterpublic of uncertain and constantly negotiated differences. In this sense, they do not resolve the problem of home and homelessness for diaspora. Instead, they offer a crucial mediating space through which that problem can be staged and navigated. (Cho 2010, 129)

Many people of Chinese descent understand the pursuit of authenticity in the restaurant business to be an impossible mission because, as Joseph Mo comments:

It is impossible to judge dishes cooked in one restaurant more authentic than the one cooked in another place. I understand authenticity in the way that somebody can cook exactly the same as the creator of this dish when it first came out. However, nobody can do it, even the master who teaches you. How can you say yours is authentic? What we

can do is to do it traditionally. You are always learning and cooking in a tradition no matter what tradition is. (Joseph Mo 2013)

However, as Turgeon and Pastinelli write, “Food is mobile, multivocal, and polysemic,” that it is able to move “from one group to another,” express “different voices,” and “take on different meanings depending on the intention of the consumers” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 250). Chinese food in Newfoundland conveys “a set of alternative values: tradition, continuity, authenticity, and pluralism” (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 256). In this sense, Chinese food in Newfoundland therefore highlights values which showcase the social and cultural changes of contemporary Canadian or more broadly, North American society. Chinese food in this case is rooted in various Chinese culinary traditions, which are brought with and maintained by Chinese immigrants, and the larger Newfoundland context, which over time has evolved from a relatively closed, homogeneous population to a more open and multicultural society. Newfoundland’s Chinese culinary history provides examples of how people positioned in divergent culinary streams continuously negotiate their perceptions of the “authentic” Chinese food in light of these shifting cultural dynamics.

The next chapter will continue the discussion of Chinese cultural practice in both the private and the public domains via the Chinese New Year’s celebrations in Newfoundland.

Chapter Five

Celebrating Chineseness: Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newfoundland

This chapter attempts to, first of all, restore the historical context of Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland and explore how the early public image of this ethnic festival was presented in local newspaper reports. Secondly, this chapter looks at how individuals of Chinese descent observe Chinese New Year differently in private space in both historical and contemporary contexts. Thirdly, this chapter probes the process by which Chinese New Year, which was mostly celebrated in the private sphere, especially in the early days, has become a significant local multicultural marker which is recognized and accepted in the wider society beyond the boundaries of Chinese confines. Finally, the final section of this chapter discusses the organization of the contemporary Chinese New Year celebrations hosted by the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and includes opinions of some members of the Chinese community regarding the public celebrations.

Early Chinese New Year Celebrations in Newfoundland (1890s – Early 1970s)

Chinese New Year celebrations, along with foodways and other old world traditions and customs, were brought with Chinese immigrants to their new overseas settlements. As in many other host countries, the celebrations of Chinese New Year in Newfoundland started immediately after the first arrival of Chinese in 1895. The *Daily News* reported the first New Year's celebration in St. John's as follows: "The Celestials of New Gower Street celebrated a special event on Wednesday. Their novel manner of celebration - which was a noisy one - attached a large crowd around their places of business. The laundry was illuminated and a display of firework was given" (*Daily News*, February 14, 1896). This short description reveals four

important aspects of early Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland: first, the celebration was on the same day as set in the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, Wednesday, February 12th, 1896; second, the celebration was a group activity; third, the location of the festival – a laundry, the Chinese commercial space but closed, was both public and private; fourth, the appearance of the Chinese establishments was enhanced and festive decorations were presented. In addition, the report also indicates Newfoundlanders' first reaction towards the celebration: somewhat negative but also mixed with curiosity. On the one hand, they considered Chinese New Year to be annoying because of the associated noise and the unexpected mass congregation of foreigners. On the other hand, they also enjoyed the colourful festive presentation at the Chinese laundries.

Since then, reports with more details related to Chinese New Year occasionally have appeared in local newspapers. For instance, on February 28, 1907, *Evening Herald* published an article entitled “Chinese New Year To-Day” with more details about the festival:

To-day begins the Chinese New Year celebration – begins, for with the Celestial it takes three days for the old year to make his last kicks. During that time the joss stick burns, the Mongolian soul rejoices itself in fatness, and the air is rent by the unseemly noise of Oriental fire-crackers. In these days of feasting the laundryman goes about in his best frock, and his bland smile grows still blander as he looks in pity upon the unhappy “felin devil.” Moreover, his ancestors and the other things that he worships come in for all sorts of adoration during these days. (*Evening Herald* February 28, 1907)

Although this report includes some derision, expressed in words such as “Mongolian soul,” “unseemly noise,” “frock” and “bland smile,” it also refers to some important ritualistic and customary elements of Chinese New Year, which is considerably different from how Newfoundlanders celebrate their “New Year”. Significantly, together with festive decoration and difference in festival time, the way the Chinese celebrated their New Year strengthened the exoticism of “Chineseness” in this former British colony.

Within these four aforementioned aspects, the date of Chinese New Year which differed from the New Year in the Western world might be the most exotic feature to non-Chinese people. For example, on September 21, 1906, the *Evening Herald* reported, “Some 43 Chinamen, led by Kim Lee, and all in full fig and smoking cigars left by this morning’s train for an outing at Whitbourne. They are celebrating the beginning of the Chinese New Year” (*Evening Herald* September 21, 1906). On the following day, in another piece in the *Evening Herald*, the author endorsed the fact that the departure of thirty-three²⁴ Chinese in September was for the celebration of Chinese New Year, which is actually a winter festival:

Yesterday the Herald chronicled the departure of 33 Chinamen under the leadership of Kim Lee, for Whitbourne, to celebrate the Chinese New Year. This morning, however, the news reached town that they really went to Dunville Station near Placentia, and boarded last night the yacht Frolic, which arrived there two days before with only four men in her, and which went up North East Arm yesterday presumably to meet them, as she sailed out of Placentia Bay this morning at daybreak, for parts unknown. The authorities have ordered the cruiser Neptune in chase of her, as she has violated our laws in embarking passengers with a permit; and the Canadian and American authorities will be notified...as it is thought that this strange proceeding is an attempt to smuggle them into either Canada or the United States. (*Evening Herald*, September 22, 1906)

Two days after the appearance of the above story, an unknown reader, who represented the literate class, who were able to read newspapers and were indeed aware of Chinese New Year, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Evening Telegram* to challenge what he claimed was false broadcasting in the *Evening Herald*, whose intention was suspicious:

Dear Sir, The Herald on Saturday repeated its statement of Friday that thirty-three Chinamen, under the leadership of Kim Lee, had gone out to Whitbourne to celebrate the Chinese New Year, and added that they really went to Placentia and boarded the yacht Frolic, leaving for parts unknown. Thus, as far as Kim Lee the popular laundryman of the West End is concerned, is a huge mistake if not something stronger, for Kim Lee was delivering his customers their work on Saturday night, and went to

²⁴ In the first piece, the number of Chinese was 43, but for some reason, it was 33 in the second one.

Sunday school at Alexander Street yesterday afternoon. He was surprised when spoken to of Chinamen going away; they are not his cousins any how [sic]. Kim Lee also says that the opening of the Chinese new year will not be until 15th January, 1907, and that he does not “smoke even when in the full fig. – Yours, etc., Interested. (*Evening Telegram* September 24, 1906)

As shown above, the misunderstanding or editorial mistake made by the *Evening Herald* might be attributed to the fact that many British or Irish Newfoundlanders, who represented the majority of the Island’s population, were not familiar with the tradition of Chinese New Year. However, the ignorance of Newfoundlanders could not be explained as the sole excuse. I would argue that the “mistake” could have been intentionally made by the author who was influenced by political ideologies of the day and purposely portrayed the Chinese as an untrustworthy people who used their heritage as an excuse for illegal activities. After the passage of the discriminatory Chinese immigration act, conflicts between Chinese residents and the general public intensified. In this particular historical period, distorted stories such as those rumours of a Chinese invasion as discussed previously in Chapter Two, were widely spread and reported as fact in local media. This directly or indirectly exasperated the existing racial and cultural separation between Chinese and other Newfoundlanders and hindered the communication between Chinese immigrants and other ethnic groups in the society.

In addition to local confusion about the festival date and some distortions, the reports also reveal that the early Chinese New Year celebrations were often celebrated under the leadership of community leaders such as Au Kim Lee. In the pre-confederation period in Newfoundland, the Chinese community consisted exclusively of males who came from the coastal part of Canton province in southern China and were all related to each other either by kinship or shared regional identity. In this community, men relied on each other for mutual assistance and social support in which community leaders not only played important roles in leading and helping their co-ethnics

in organizing commercial and social life, they also actively engaged them in maintaining ethnic culture and traditions, which strongly tied individuals of the same ethnicity and created a sense of Chinese community.

During the decades before Confederation, under the leadership of some more educated Chinese residents (e.g. Au Kim Lee and William Ping), and with the formation of some Chinese clan associations such as the Tai Mei Club (1928) and the Hong Hang Society (1932), sometimes Chinese cultural gatherings were held in private business buildings or in rented community centers. Kim Hong was told by some seniors in the community that, “Before the foundation of the Chinese Association, people mostly celebrated festivals like Chinese New Year at the home level, except those celebrations at private clubs such as the Hong Hang Society and the Tai Mei Society. They did have a little bit of celebration in their club houses during Chinese New Year. There was no performance at the time and people might only have dinner together or play a little bit of mah-jong. Nothing public was organized” (Kim Hong 2011). It seems that, at least in the first few decades of Chinese presence in Newfoundland, ethnic celebrations were “controlled” at a private or co-ethnic level.

As shown in Chapter Three, the work life in Chinese laundries was extremely drudging and the Chinese workers usually had little leisure time. However, in comparison with their later occupation in the restaurant business, laundry work seemed less exhausting. As one of the old timers, George Au, who at the age of 84 is still working, says, “When I was working at Newfoundland Laundry in St. John’s in late 1940s and early 1950s, I saw all people got one day off per week. We usually took Sunday off. But when I started my own restaurant, I never got a day off. The motto to us is that you never close your restaurant” (George Au 2014). In the late 1950s, many Chinese laundries were closed and a majority of these Chinese who retired from the

laundry business began to set up restaurants. The lives of the Chinese were so occupied by the work in their restaurants, which were open seven days a week, that they actually had very little social space or available time to celebrate Chinese New Year in Newfoundland. Billy Hong recalls, “In the early days on Bell Island, because we didn’t have Chinese calendars and we had to work every day all year round, we didn’t even know when Chinese New Year was. We always missed it. In the later years, we just followed local festivals like Christmas and New Year so that we are so acculturated now” (Billy Hong 2013).

When spouses and children came to Newfoundland in the 1950s and 1970s, many Chinese families who were involved in mom-and-pop restaurant businesses still trivialized the importance of the festival in their social life because they could not afford or did not want to spare some time for celebrations of Chinese New Year which was not on their holiday list. Wallace Hong says, “We didn’t really celebrate Chinese holidays in Newfoundland. We had only two days off annually which one was Christmas Day and the other was New Year’s Day. We never closed for the Chinese New Year” (Wallace Hong 2013).

Nowadays, as mentioned in Chapter Three, although the traditional work ethic has changed over the years and some restaurant owners like Rennies So at Magic Wok take annual vacations during Chinese New Year seasons, many Chinese in the restaurant business still place working as first priority in their lives. Joseph Mo reports: “In the first few years in Newfoundland, I always enthusiastically celebrated Chinese New Year with my co-workers and other friends. But I gradually found that many Chinese people here were not that interested in celebrations and were working all the time. Sometimes, the boss of my restaurant would ask me to cook a few more dishes and invite some friends to come over for dinner. That was it. So now, I am somewhat reluctant to do any celebration” (Joseph Mo 2013).

The early history of Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland shows the shift in the attitude of Chinese individuals of Cantonese background towards their festive tradition: they brought along the tradition and had practiced for a considerable time, but gradually downplayed it as their work load increased.

Celebrations at home in the Contemporary Period (1970s – Now)

Since the late 1960s, because of the influx of Chinese professionals from all over the world and the emergence of local born second-and later-generation Chinese descendants, the homogeneous Cantonese Chinese community has changed to a multi-ethnic network of individuals with diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Nowadays, Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland are still mostly held in private settings. Jack Santino claims that, although holidays are widely celebrated, “They are always personally interpreted” (Santino 1994, xx). In individual Chinese households, Chinese New Year conveys different cultural and social meanings for each family who might observe their own traditions based on their understanding of the festival. In some families, traditional food is the center of the celebration. Peter So, who was born in Fujian Province and raised in Hong Kong, says, “The way we celebrate Chinese festivals is always food related. My wife would cook very well. Sometimes, during Chinese New Year, she would make lunar rice cake” (Peter So 2009). Tzu-Hao Hsu says, “Our New Year special is Hot Pot. This is the thing we carry out from Taiwan. For my family, there is always a feast followed by a hot pot dinner. This is more tradition for my family” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012).

From all the variety of dishes served during Chinese New Year, dumplings are the most popular and important, especially to those immigrants from the northern part of China and those who self-identify as descendants of Northern Chinese. Lewis Yang, whose family is from Henan

Province 河南, says, “It is always busy in the house as we still make dumplings by hand during the New Year” (Lewis Yang 2013). Yuming Zhao, who is from Liaoning Province 辽宁 in Northern China, also reports, “Making dumplings is the only traditional thing we would do to celebrate the Chinese New Year” (Yuming Zhao 2012). In some families, traditional customs associated with the consumption of dumplings are practiced. For example, since 2011, I have been invited by the Wu family to attend their Chinese New Year celebrations. Mr. Guangliang Wu, who went to Taiwan from Henan province after the communists took over Mainland China, is good at making dumplings, which were a popular festive food in his hometown. One of his family traditions is wrapping some coins in the dumplings. The belief is that anyone who gets the “stuffed” dumplings is considered to be lucky in the next year.

In addition to food, entertainment is also involved in the private celebration of Chinese New Year in Newfoundland. Lewis Yang continues, “Also, if we don’t have school, we sit and watch a live stream of the famous Chinese festival show on TV [China Central TV’s New Year’s Gala 中国中央电视台春节联欢晚会]. That I have to say is always my favourite part” (Lewis Yang 2013). In addition to watching festival shows from their home countries, some other pastime activities are also popular in individual households, as Daniel Wong, a Hong Kong native, says, “We normally play mah-jong or sing karaoke together” (Daniel Wong 2013). Traditionally, Chinese New Year is the time for people to take time away from their busy daily lives and to relax.

In Newfoundland, Chinese New Year is typically more a time for family than merely a moment for leisure. Francis Tam who comes from a Cantonese background family that immigrated in 1974, recalls:

On Chinese New Year's day in Corner Brook, my grandparents closed their restaurant early. They would close the restaurants after the rush. It might not be 5, but around 8. The restaurant was normally closed at 3a.m. We used to have a big family dinner. My grandfather and the elder children would help to prepare the meal. There were a lot of traditional dishes on the table. My grandmother used to make Chinese pastries, like Chinese rice cake. And my grandparents and my parents would pass around red envelopes to the younger kids. We really loved that. We also visited different Chinese restaurants during Chinese festival time. As kids, we just went around and collected lucky money from every restaurant. Oh we also did the worship to remember those elders in the family who had passed away. My grandfather would talk about the ancestors and his religion. After dinner, the kids would play. The adults would play different things like mah-jong or Chinese poker. (Francis Tam 2013)

Mark Chan who was born in Hong Kong and raised in Newfoundland, shares a similar memory about his family-centered Chinese New Year: "When my grandma was still in Newfoundland, we used to have a big family dinner together during the Chinese New Year season. I have so many uncles, aunts and cousins who all went to grandma's place and we had a really good time together. And of course, the best part was receiving lucky money from the elders" (Mark Chan 2011). During the festival season, especially on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, many people greet their families and friends with sayings like 'Happy New Year' or "Wish you good luck," particularly to those family members who are not in the vicinity. Francis Tam says, "My mother's family are still in China and they never immigrated. When Chinese New Year or other festivals are around, we would talk to them via long-distance calls. We always took turns to greet our relatives in China. Long distance was more expensive back in the 80s and 90s. So every time, my mom had a timer set and she would tell her relatives to cut the line when a certain amount of time was up" (Francis Tam 2013).

In addition to family reunions and greetings to distant family members, Chinese New Year is also a time for gatherings of friends. Tzu-Hao Hsu says, "There are a lot of house parties and potlucks during the Chinese New Year season, and St. John's is such a small place, so it is so easy to meet people" (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). Ching Hsiang Lin also says, "We always celebrate

Chinese New Year with our Taiwanese friends” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Chinese New Year, which is the most important holiday in Chinese tradition and is exceptionally different from other social occasions, also provides a unique circumstance for people, especially Chinese, to transmit specific social and cultural meanings to others who are not familiar with this tradition. Lili Wang whose hometown is the Taiyuan City 太原 in Shānxi Province 山西 of China, says:

It is very common for some families to get together to celebrate a particular holiday or a particular event. Chinese people here are very close to each other and we are usually busy during the weekends. We see our friends all the time. We don’t get together only on special festivals. However, Chinese New Year, which is so different from other festivals, especially local festivals like Christmas and Easter or others, is so special to us. It reminds us the old days when we were in China or other Chinese communities and it is a good time to introduce our ancestral culture to our children and our non-Chinese friends. For example, in a party of Jessie Mong (From Vietnam) and her husband (from Malaysia), all guests except me and my husband, were all their colleagues in the hospital. Jessie and her husband told me that they were so proud to host an event to let other people know about Chinese culture. (Lili Wang 2012)

In some second or later generation Chinese families without seniors, younger members, whose cultural perception was strongly influenced by the elders, still keenly attempt to keep the tradition going. In these families, the celebration of Chinese New Year is still an important ceremonial family event. Bill Ping says, “We always decorate for the Chinese New Year. If I am home, we would cook a big feast and invite a bunch of friends to come over” (Bill Ping 2012). Bill’s wife Violet adds, “Our son, Will, would get his lucky money. That is our tradition as a family” (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011). For many younger generation Chinese, Chinese New Year is one of a few avenues for them and their families to connect to their cultural roots. Gordon Gin says, “I do celebrate some Chinese holidays like the Chinese New Year but I don’t celebrate those ones that I am not familiar” (Gordon Gin and Rebecca Law 2009). The

connection with their cultural roots seems significant to these younger generations in constructing their ethnic and cultural identity. Bill Ping continues:

Talking about my kids, I make sure every year we have a Chinese New Year celebration. Now like my daughter who is in Alberta, she still celebrates Chinese New Year. Say how to keep the tradition goes. For me, it is easy because I am surrounded by a lot of stuff of dad. You can see a lot of Chinese stuff in the house. This stuff I can use to promote to my kids. I think you got to promote it. Like I said, my daughter in Alberta still celebrates Chinese New Year because I always made them aware of Chinese festivals like Chinese New Year and Moon Festival. Hopefully when she has her family, she would say, "Okay, let's celebrate Chinese New Year." I don't think she participates into any Chinese associations or anything like that in Alberta, but she still celebrates it in her private space. (Bill Ping 2012)

However, due to the size of the community and the overwhelmingly dominant local culture, many Chinese individuals find it difficult to celebrate Chinese New Year in Newfoundland. Lili Wang comments, "You don't really feel that the festival is coming because nobody is talking about it. I have to constantly remind myself to call my parents and relatives in China when the New Year comes" (Lili Wang 2012). Because of the lack of festive atmosphere locally, Tzu-Hao Hsu notes, "When we are in Newfoundland, most of the traditions are reserved in our minds instead of physically doing them. But if you put me in Taiwan or in China, I am in temples or in other situations, all my memories will be back and I would practice as traditional Chinese. It is all affected by the environment" (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012).

In response to the difficulties of celebrating, some Chinese blame the insufficiency of social and institutional support on the host society and different levels of Canadian governments. For example, Francis Tam says:

The population of Chinese language speakers is the third largest in Canada. Why isn't the Chinese New Year recognized nationally as a Canadian celebration? Yes, if you are lucky enough to live in Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal, where there are the three biggest Chinatowns, they would have Chinese parades. But even in these places, they are organized by local Chinese communities instead of the City councils. It is not something that the City of Toronto would do. I hope in the future, they can recognize it. You know, that is really the biggest day for us. There are also some other festivals

around the year, but the acknowledgement to Chinese New Year would be nice. I think we will get there one day. (Francis Tam 2013)

Pengfei Liu also comments, “When I was in Australia early this year, during the Chinese New Year season, you can see ‘Happy New Year’ signs all around the country and even the Australian Prime Minister made a speech to greet Chinese residents. Here, in Canada, especially in Newfoundland, you don’t really see any” (Pengfei Liu 2013). Some Chinese choose to accept the non-statutory status of Chinese New Year. Zachery Pan reports, “The way we celebrate Chinese New Year is simply dining out with family and friends. If the holiday doesn’t fall on the weekends, we go to work as usual and it is just like another working day” (Zachery Pan 2012).

Therefore, in many local Chinese families, celebrations of the Chinese New Year are usually small in scale. As a result, many younger people of Chinese descent are not well educated about the cultural aspects of this festival. Wendy Long states:

In Newfoundland, I don’t really promote too much Chinese culture to my children. My idea is, if you are not in that traditional circumstance which is full of Chinese motifs, it is meaningless to talk too much about the culture because it is impossible to satisfy the curiosity of children in reality. For example, if you want to celebrate the Lantern Festival, which is the last day of the Chinese New Year’s season, but, in the earlier days, how can you get lanterns and Chinese sticky rice balls? When my daughter was younger, she always asked me to tell her stories about China. I did tell her a lot about Chinese folklore, but I didn’t make her eager to the things that we couldn’t prepare for her. You can inspire them but don’t go too far. (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012)

In some smaller communities in Newfoundland outside of St. John’s, the younger generation of Chinese descent have even fewer connections to their ancestral culture and traditions. In Margaret Chan’s interview with Jo-Jo Leung, the latter actually had little involvement with her heritage in her hometown, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland:

Margaret: “Do you have any involvement with any Chinese Festivals?

Jo-Jo: “No, unfortunately.”

Margaret: “Do you have any celebration at home? Do you do anything special?”

Jo-Jo: “Not really. But if my mom came back from Taiwan, she might bring back some food.”

Margaret: “Do you do anything special for the Chinese New Year?”

Jo-Jo: “No. But my grandma did give me some red packages of lucky money.” (Jo-Jo Leung 2003)

Nonetheless, in some other relatively rural and/or smaller communities, celebrations of Chinese New Year highlight the cultural diversity in local societies. Francis Tam remembers, “When my parents moved to Grand Falls, in our family, we still celebrated traditional Chinese festivals like my grandparents did in Corner Brook. My mom took over my grandmother’s position and made her own traditional festive pastries” (Francis Tam 2013). Sometimes, Chinese families who are relatively “isolated” in smaller communities choose to involve members of the broader community to join their celebrations. Francis Tam continues, “We also said some greetings to our customers when whatever Chinese festivals came, like, during Chinese New Year, we said, ‘Happy Chinese New Year’” (Francis Tam 2013). In regard to Chinese New Year celebrations in rural Newfoundland, Kim Hong comments, “Usually, Chinese people in smaller communities who were mostly restaurant people did quite well and they normally knew more local people. Therefore, they always invited their customers to the Chinese New Year celebrations or other festive occasions in their places. I think they are smart because through that way, you might get more customers and if you got any problems, those guests who were invited would come out and help you. Also, they promote some Chinese culture and tradition” (Kim Hong 2009).

Differences in individual celebrations of Chinese New Year represent how diverse Chinese residents are in Newfoundland. They are different from each other geographically, occupationally, generationally and in approaches to festivals, for example, how Chinese New Year is observed and what meanings it embodies. The various and sometimes competing experiences of Chinese New Year celebrations in individual households actually engender a fluid,

contested and heterogeneous rather than fixed and stable Chinese diasporic identity. A variety of versions of Chinese New Year celebrations like the Latvian Song Festival examined by Inta Gale Carpenter, provide all co-ethnics “with a common cultural grounding in which to come together, each knowing approximately what to expect, giving them a relationship even before they meet” (Carpenter 1996, 116) and serve as a platform for further negotiations, despite their differences. The common idea of Chinese New Year helps bridge subgroup differences such as place of birth, occupation, social class and political ideology.

From Private to Public

Scholars of festival studies in Folklore and other disciplines have long recognized that, as an important aspect of social life and cultural tradition, festivals crystallize, galvanize and articulate local identities and reflects people’s sense of place (e.g. De Bres and Davis 2001, Derrett 2003, Falassi 1987, McClinchey 2008, McClinchey and Carmichael 2010, Quinn 2003, Turner 1982, Waade 2002). Torunn Selberg writes, “in addition to focusing on a particular theme, festivals are also often a celebration of the location where they take place. A place can, therefore, become inextricably linked to a certain festival, and, in this way, a community can become ‘the city’ of the particular theme that the festival celebrates” (Selberg 2006, 297).

As discussed previously, when the Chinese first came to Newfoundland their culture and traditions were confined to ethnic establishments such as Chinese laundries in the beginning and later on the properties belonging to the Chinese clan associations. In the early decades of Chinese in Newfoundland, in addition to the cultural differences, the political and economic suffering endured by Chinese immigrants and the institutional restriction on Chinese immigration to Newfoundland also produced a cultural bias that Chinese traditions were pagan and uncivilized.

Non-Chinese individuals with this bias often hesitated to approach Chinese culture and Chinese cultural events such as celebrations of Chinese New Year, which were mainly observed by small groups of Chinese privately. The Chinese in Newfoundland were treated no differently than Chinese immigrants in many places. Researchers have found that Chinese New Year celebrations were confined in ethnic enclaves in many cities. For example, Chiou-ling Yeh describes how Chinese residents of San Francisco celebrated their New Year in the nineteenth century:

Chinese immigrants had honoured the Chinese New Year in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century, but their celebration for the most part were private and family- or community-oriented. For the Chinese New Year dinner, bachelors congregated at the homes of those who could afford to bring families to the United States. Family associations sponsored banquets and lion dances (in which performers wearing a lion costume mimic the animal's movements) to forge bonds among members. Occasional "outside barbarians" were invited to join the celebration. (Yeh 2008, 2)

Krista Chatman Li points out that the \$500 Canadian head tax that began in 1903 and the full-scale Chinese exclusion starting in 1923, kept the Chinese in Newfoundland out of Canada so that they "were unable to benefit from the assistance and camaraderie provided by Chinese organizations such as the Chinese Benevolent Association" (Li 2010, 231). Li further suggests that in the early years because of insufficient support from outside communities and the non-existence of Chinese associations that often serve to organize cultural activities, "Chinese traditions, such as celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festivals or the Chinese New Year, were often neglected" (Li 2010, 231). Thus, due to the geographic distance from China, political separation from Canada and the United States, and small population without a concrete ethnic ghetto, the Chinese in Newfoundland were more isolated than their counterparts in larger metropolitan centers. Their limited accessibility to social and cultural resources to maintain traditional festivals accentuated their lack of connection to their ancestral country because as Yeh argues,

“these old world rituals served as a link between immigrants and their home countries and created a sense of community in their adopted country” (Yeh 2008, 15). At the same time, spatial restrictions around the celebrations of Chinese New Year as well as other ethnic festivals and cultural events would have inhibited Chinese residents’ sense of belonging to the city and the host community.

The celebration of Chinese New Year in places such as Chinese-owned restaurants and laundries turned everyday workspaces into an exclusive Chinese celebratory space which was “reclaimed, cleared, delimited, blessed, adorned, forbidden to normal activities” (Falassi 1987, 4). However, this festival space could be invaded by unsuspecting individuals from the host community and festivities interrupted by inter-ethnic business interactions. Customers who entered the celebratory space and festive time were immediately transformed into unexpected visitors of Chinese New Year and experienced an alteration to what Falassi describes as “the usual and daily function and meaning of time and space” (Falassi 1987, 4). In an article regarding the Chinese New Year’s celebration in 1985, the *Evening Telegram* reporter also included a historical piece about the local response to the decoration of the Sing Lee Laundry, the first Chinese Laundry in Newfoundland during the turn of the 20th century that, “The Laundry on New Gower Street was decorated ‘with those fantastic characters we see on our tea chests’... ‘by the crowd of small children congregating outside windows, watching with open mounted astonishment’” (*Evening Telegram* 25 February 1985). These kinds of cultural interactions between Chinese and non-Chinese residents potentially improved inter-group understanding and contributed to the acceptance of Chinese culture as is suggested in the following report published in the *Evening Telegram*:

“A Peculiar Instrument” – Last night quite a crowd were attracted to New Gower Street, opposite the laundry of Kim Lee, where one of the Celestials, Jim lung,

performed on a wind instrument resembling a flageolet and fitted with a small reed as a mouthpiece. He performed very skillfully on the instrument which gave forth a sound much like the Highlanders bagpipes, which was rather harsh when one was near but sounded very nice in the distance. It is a favourite musical instrument in China.
(*Evening Telegram* July 7, 1909)

As the most important part of Chinese culture, Yeh suggests that Chinese New Year, which is often linked to the wider political, sociological, and economic contexts, serves as a convenient window for outsiders to look into the Chinese community (Yeh 2008). Since the 1970s, when Canada adopted multiculturalism as its national policy, the Chinese in Newfoundland have been encouraged by local multiculturalism supporters (many of them have personal interactions with Chinese individuals) not only to preserve their culture on a private or ethnic level, but to showcase their traditions and to educate the general public. The Secretary of State for Canada and the administrative board and members of the congregation at Gower Street United Church were among the keen advocates who were willing to provide some financial or other kinds of assistance. Chinese residents were asked to step out of their households or community centers to present their heritage in public. Under the auspices of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism, voluntary organizations like the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, under the leadership of some of the more educated and acculturated professionals, could secure financial support and recognition from the outside the Chinese community. In 1977, the first public celebration of Chinese New Year in Newfoundland became a reality (see Figure 41).



Figure 41: Cover of the CANL's 1977 Chinese New Year Celebration Book. Courtesy of Kim Hong.

The 1977 Chinese New Year party was the “first and most important mission” of the newly formed Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (Kim Hong 2009). On February 8,

1977, the Association sent out a newsletter to invite all its members to a series of activities to celebrate the Chinese New Year. In this newsletter, members and friends of the association were notified that the animal sign of the New Year was the snake and that New Year's Day was February 18, 1977. They were also informed that all activities were organized by the executive of the Chinese Association in cooperation with the Chinese Student Society of Memorial University. The whole program included a culture exhibition, a slide show, movies and speakers on February 17-18 at the Engineering Building of M.U.N., a culture exhibition on February 19 at the Avalon Mall Shopping Center, a variety show and Chinese buffet supper on the February 20th at the Auditorium Annex Building of the College of Fisheries, and on the same day a New Year's dance with Orchestra Ed Goff at the E.B. Foran Room of the City Hall (*CANL Newsletter* February 8, 1977).

The activities held on February 20th were the main events of the festival. The first event was the variety show, which consisted of some traditional Chinese performances such as the moon light flower dance, kung fu, Chinese song-singing and the fan dance, and some presentations of other cultures such as a violin solo (Summer Night and Meditation) and Thai classical dance. The performers were not all Chinese but from diverse ethnicities. The Chinese performers also represented a broad spectrum of ages, countries of birth and immigration statuses. After the variety show, there were greetings from the chief guest, who, in 1977, was the Honourable Tom Hickey, Minister of Tourism of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition to Hon. Tom Hickey, as Kim Hong recounts, other non-Chinese guests included:

Rev. George LeDrew and wife of the Gower Street United Church, Rev. Levi Mehaney and wife, Rupert Greene, John Murphy and Willer Ayre from St. John's City Council, John Pike and Paul McDonald of the Provincial Immigration Department, Dr. F.N. Firme and wife of the Filipino Association, Dr. C.M. Pujara and wife of the Indian Association, Gary Gray of Y.M.C.A., Don Knight, Robert Butler and Dr. Barrett of the College of Fisheries, Ken Duggan and "Neil or Mike O'Brian" of the Trades College,

Food inspectors D.A. Strong and D. Martin, Mr. and Mrs. John Browne of the Police Department and the Fire Chief Cecil Sooley. (Kim Hong 2009)

All these guests attended free of charge. The variety show started with “Ode to Newfoundland,” the official provincial anthem, and ended with the national anthem “O Canada” sung by all attendees. A buffet-style supper started at around 4:00 or 4:30 consisting of food that was mainly donated by local restaurants, whose owners were members of the Chinese Association. Dishes in the buffet included “spring rolls, barbecued pork, chicken fried rice, chicken guy ding, beef and broccoli and lemon chicken” (Kim Hong 2009). Desserts such as cookies and cakes were served after the meal. These were made by female members of the executive or by spouses of male executive members of the Association, such as Mely Hong (Kim Hong’s wife), Jeannie Aue and Bernice Gin (Kim Hong 2009). At the end of the evening, a ball was held and the majority of the attendees were couples without young children.

At the 1977 Chinese New Year celebration, two locations chosen to host the main events – the variety show and buffet dinner and dance party were held at the Auditorium Annex Building of the College of Fisheries and the E.B. Foran Room of the City Hall, instead of any Chinese restaurants or the Tai Mei Club which still existed in the mid-1990s. The transplantation of Chinese New Year from ethnic places to public sites indicates a new-established connection between Chinese and the host community who, at least, politically and socially accepts the presence of Chinese and their cultural tradition as a respectable existence. At the most basic level, this move to a public space for the festival site, indicates that the Chinese community had grown large enough to warrant a bigger venue (see Figure 42). The choice also suggests that Chinese residents were willing, or perhaps wanted, to share their culture with their neighbours. Finally, as discussed earlier, it indicates that Chinese residents were gradually being absorbed into Newfoundland society. Chinese community members were now able to lease space for their

“exotic” cultural activities. In the later years, owners of places like the Colony Club or caretakers of the Royal Canadian Legion (see Figure 43) allowed Chinese residents to alter their space for the New Year festivities. As a result, a secular and public location was temporarily transformed into a sacred and traditional space through the use of symbolic decorations such as the banner of the CANL, traditional Chinese couplets with special New Year’s greetings, lanterns and paper cuttings that created a decidedly Chinese festive atmosphere.



Figure 42: 1978 CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration at the Auditorium of St. Mary's Church, St. John's (left to right: Kim Hong, Barbara Ryan and Chan Chau Tam). Courtesy of Kim Hong.



Figure 43: Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion in 2011, St. John's.

Nevertheless, any ethnic transformation was temporary because an ethnic festival is only “a single socio-cultural space for a limited period of time” (Turner 1982, 21). The relocation of Chinese New Year celebrations from Chinese-owned establishments to rental “mainstream” spaces actually turned the festival into a “placeless” event that had little or no specific cultural attachment to a particular place (MacLeod 2006) such as the Auditorium Annex Building of the College of Fisheries and the E.B. Foran Room of the City Hall. Even if meaningful semiotic signs helped vouch for the authenticity of Chineseness during New Year’s celebrations, throughout the event guests and attendees would have been reminded constantly of who really owned the space through the presence of western furniture (e.g. long tables), cutlery (knives and forks instead of chopsticks), kitchen cookers and the bar. In addition, all wait staff and members, which I would consider as an inextricable part of the place, were non-Chinese.

Therefore, during Chinese New Year holiday seasons, places such as the Auditorium Annex Building of the College of Fisheries and the E.B. Foran Room of the City Hall actually become a multilocal space (Rodman 1992) which is concurrently claimed by different groups as their cultural and social terrains. In consideration of the aspects like mass communication and personal mobility in these places, Edward Relph theoretically labels them as placelessness, to where people have less distinctive sense of place and little emotional attachment (Relph 1976). Based on his investigation of the ties between people and place, Relph probes the difference between insideness and outsideness in terms of personal experience in the place and classifies seven sub-divisions of this opposition. They are: existential insideness, empathetic insideness, behavioural insideness, vicarious insideness, incidental outsideness, objective outsideness and existential outsideness (Relph 1976, 51-55).

The communal interaction between insideness and outsideness in the case of Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland is represented by the communication between Chinese attendees and non-Chinese guests in the “placeless” event sites. In this sense, at the same time a “mainstream” place is transformed into an ethnic space, the reverse process is also in play, as the ethnic is turned into the mainstream featuring non-ethnic characteristics. Margaret Chan’s findings concerning traditional Chinese festivals in Toronto apply here. Chan explores how public mainstream venues like The Royal Ontario Museum transform the ethnic performers into “a live prop and an object of display ... fitting in with whatever mandate and image the venue presents” (Chan 2001, 242) for more general and public purposes. When an ethnic festival like Chinese New Year in Newfoundland is advertised to attract the general public in a wider society, it shares some characteristics with the so-called “event tourism” or “festival tourism” coined by Donald Getz (2008). The festivals or events become “the venues for tourism experiences, the

context for social-psychological interaction, and the phenomena by which this behaviour can be described, explained and predicted” (Snepenger et al. 2007, 310). As a “touristic” event, the CANL’s Chinese New Year’s celebrations are creolized by the organizers to combine the Chinese individuals’ perceptions on Chineseness and the expectations of non-Chinese attendees.

The Hybridity of the Public Chinese New Year’s Celebrations in Newfoundland

The 1977 CANL’s Chinese New Year’s celebrations were organized by the executive members of the CANL including Kim Hong, Sing Lang Au, Dick Mar, Jeannie Tom, Rita Au, Brian Winn, Ted Hong and Margaret Chang and some active Chinese families such as Chan Chau Tam’s and Daniel Wong’s. Within these organizers, Jeannie Tom and Rita Au were local born; Margaret Chang was a British Newfoundlander who married a Chinese man; Kim Hong, Sing Lang Au and Ted Hong came to Newfoundland as teenagers and went to the local school Bishop Field College; Brian Winn was from a Chinese community in Burma (which was formerly British-ruled) and Chan Chau Tam and Daniel Wong came from British-ruled Hong Kong. They all attached to Chinese culture in some way, although Kim Hong, Sing Lang Au, Ted Hong, Chan Chau Tam and Daniel Wong had more experience than the others. However, they were also educated to local Newfoundland culture or say, western culture (British) in general. They represent the cultural in-betweeners or cultural wanderers who were enriched by both cultures and some of them like Jeannie Tom and Rita Au often claimed a different understanding of being Chinese from the older generations. Therefore, the 1977 Chinese New Year celebrations by this team presented their new definition(s) of Chineseness in the context of Newfoundland where both Chinese and Western cultures were located simultaneously. In the following years, many individuals such as Melvin Hong, Arthur Leung, Dean Hong (Kim

Hong's son) and Mary Gin who served as executive members of CANL, also had the similar social and cultural background with the executive board of 1977; thus, the format established in 1977 regarding the setting of the date and time, making up the list of invited guests and determining entertainment and the type of food was adopted in later years. Over the years, some aspects of the format have been altered to adapt the new social changes and the format itself is often in debate over whether or not it is the "authentic" and effective way to present Chineseness.

Setting of Date and Time

As mentioned earlier, according to the traditional Chinese, or lunar, calendar, the date of Chinese New Year's Day, which is established by the lunar calendar, varies every year in the western Gregorian calendar. In general, Chinese New Year's Day falls on a different date each year between Jan. 22 and Feb. 20. However, different from private celebrations in the past and today as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, public Chinese New Year is rarely celebrated on the exact New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, but more often is observed on a weekend during, or sometimes after, the traditional holiday season. The modification is often attributed to the fact that Chinese New Year is not a statutory holiday in Canada or the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Lili Wang says, "We normally have the Chinese New Year's parties on the weekend right after the exact date of each year" (Lili Wang 2012). For example, the main celebration of the 1977 Chinese New Year in St. John's was held on February 20 (which was a Sunday) rather than on the official New Year's Day of February 18. Similar changes are often found in the following years' celebrations.

Based on Emile Durkheim's classification of the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1915[1912], 47), festival time is often perceived as a different temporal dimension from the

ordinary time. Terms like extraordinary time, sacred time, or “time out of time” are widely used to refer to this liminal temporal zone (Bakhtin 1968, van Gennep 1960, Turner 1967, 1969; Manning 1983, Rappaport 1968 and Falassi 1987). In the festival period, “daily time is modified by a gradual or sudden interruption that introduces ‘time out of time,’ a special temporal dimension devoted to special activities.” (Falassi 1987, 4) Just as many other festivals create a sense of time that is different from everyday routine, Chinese New Year reflects “Chinese definitions of time and the world upon which such social phenomena are based” (Margaret Chan 2001, 62). The modification of a pre-set “sacred time” to fit into a secular or leisure slot of the mainstream society is seen by some more traditional Chinese as the compromise that organizers of the public celebration of the Chinese festival often make. Daniel Wong admits, “If you have the celebrations on the weekdays, although it is the exact date of the Chinese New Year, nobody will come because they got to work the next morning and cannot stay longer at night to enjoy” (Daniel Wong 2013). I would suggest that perhaps, the “compromise” indicates the cultural wanderers are loosely bound to the Chinese tradition.

Notwithstanding their goal of acculturation, festival organizers also attempt to keep the celebrations to fit into the traditional Chinese definition of time. Kim Hong recalls:

We normally celebrate the New Year on the weekends after the real date. At the beginning, we didn’t have too much experience in organizing Chinese New Year. I remember that we had a debate in a meeting. We were discussing if we needed to celebrate the New Year on this weekend, which was before the real date or next weekend, which was after, then a member of the association Paul Ho came in and said, “You fellows are crazy. How can you celebrate the New Year in the old year?” His words ended the debate and after that, we always had our celebrations after instead of before. (Kim Hong 2009)

In the same vein, Lili Wang comments, “One year, we had the celebration before the exact Chinese New Year’s Day because of the availability of the venue for the party. But a lot of people didn’t like it because, as they said, it was not good to have the celebration in the old year”

(Lili Wang 2012). In this sense, the shifting “from the actual holiday to a more convenient date” (Thomson 1993, 401) is not only a successful strategy to satisfy the attendees who can only dedicate their time to the celebrations on the weekends in a Canadian situation, but also a way of preserving the Chinese tradition locally.

In the first few years, the major events of the festival included a variety show, dinner and dance which were all scheduled on Sundays reflecting the fact that a majority of Chinese residents in Newfoundland were involved in the restaurant business. Kim Hong explains, “We always did the celebration on Sunday afternoons. The reason we had it at that time was because most restaurants were closed on Sunday. For those ones that were open on Sunday, many of them weren’t open until 5 o’clock. Also, non-restaurant people were not working on Sunday anyway. Therefore, most people could go” (Kim Hong 2011).

In 1983, the new president of the Association, Daniel Wong, who came to Newfoundland as a young undergraduate student from British-ruled Hong Kong as mentioned, rescheduled the main New Year’s celebration from Sunday afternoon to Saturday night and extended the dancing part to 1 a.m. He explains that the change was due to “an aim to formalize the Chinese New Year celebrations,” and the reason that an increasing number of attendees were Chinese professionals and non-Chinese guests who could not stay too late on Sundays because they had to work on Monday (Daniel Wong 2013). However, an unexpected result of the new schedule was a decline in the participation of Chinese members who worked in the restaurant industry. Those Chinese, who constituted the majority of the Chinese community in early 1980s, faced a dilemma when they had to decide whether or not to close their businesses to attend the New Year’s party. Many of them chose to stay away from the celebrations and to continue pursuing their commercial profits. At the time, some CANL senior members, such as Kim Hong, received many complaints

regarding the new schedule from owners and workers of Chinese restaurants (Kim Hong 2009). For example, he was told: “Now you have the party on Saturday night, which is usually a busy night for our restaurant people. We don’t want to close business to attend the function. Why the association don’t think about us?” (Kim Hong 2009).

The dilemma of Chinese restaurant owners on whether to go to the Chinese New Year celebration on Saturday first reflects the internal battle of Chinese individuals who are working in the food sector between preserving tradition and pursuing commercial profits. It seems that Chinese people working in restaurant business had less interest in celebrating Chinese New Year than making a living. However, these individuals’ choice to not attend the new scheduled function does not necessarily suggest that they choose to stay away from their ancestral tradition; rather, their choice of being absent at the function reflects their allegiance to the culture. Daniel Wong notes:

When I changed the day of our new year’s party to Saturday, I did not mean to exclude restaurant people from the party. Instead, I tried to encourage them to come because on Saturday, they had more chance to meet more people. But a lot of them didn’t want to close their business for the celebration because they didn’t really accept the concept of leisure. What they knew was working hard and earning more money for their children. That was the traditional Chinese worldview. Therefore, celebrating Chinese New Year or not was not that important to them. (Daniel Wong 2013)

Therefore, the different attitude towards the new schedule of CANL’s Chinese New Year celebrations reveals the contradictory perspectives of the restaurant people, most of whom represent the worldview of first and second waves of Chinese immigrants and the new generations, cultural wanderers and professionals on the expressions of their Chineseness. In the mind of the former group, cultural preservation does not have to mean actually celebrating an ethnic holiday but can be interpreted as practicing traditional principles; while, according to the

latter group, celebrating the ethnic festival with local adaption is a better way to present their understanding of the ethnicity, which is both traditional and acculturative.

Making up the list of invited guests

As shown above, the 1977 Chinese New Year party included many non-Chinese guests such as politicians, members of the clergy, officials of different governmental departments and leaders of other ethnic groups. These guests were invited because of their importance to the political, social and economic well-being of Chinese individuals and the Chinese Association in that specific period. Kim Hong explains:

In the initial years, automatically, the inviting list was about this long, but now the list is this short. The people on the list of invitation included: somebody from the provincial government, somebody from the municipal government, and more importantly, some health and food inspectors. The fire chief, the police chief, the church that we are involved with, and a few other ones were also often invited. I think you know the reason behind that. At the beginning, many Chinese were associated with the restaurant business. When inspectors came to inspect, sometimes if they knew you a little bit, you know, things might be easier. And restaurants and snack bar sometimes had fights, so you got to know the police officers better. In return, they might look after your business. Chinese people liked to have a little bit of this kind of friendship to these people. Because of the change of demography and so on, these people are not as important as they used to be, so now, primarily, the association just invites the people from municipal, provincial and federal governments. Oh, the people who I forgot to mention are the immigration people. It was very important to establish a little bit friendship and show a little bit of respect to them. So next time, when you put in an application for your mother or Mr. so and so, you can say to them that, “Hi, how are you? Enjoy Chinese New Year?” That was why we did those things at the beginning and the tradition had been carried on for many years. In addition, it was very inexpensive. We just gave out a dozen of tickets or so, how much that cost you? And it is only once a year. In return, the inspectors would look after your kitchen. You know, sometimes many people didn’t know how to say “thank you” to these people. Also, instead of just seeing those people came around to inspect your kitchen, you liked to see them social too. So the New Year’s celebration was a good occasion that you could take. And you know what Chinese people liked to do, sometimes, particularly the older ones, said, “Come on to the bar and I buy you some drinks.” Where could you get that opportunity? Those restaurant and take-out people, they didn’t really go to Canadian functions, it was easy for them to do at Chinese New Year. That was our thinking at the time. (Kim Hong 2011)

Since 1977, inviting selected guests from the wider community has been a tradition of the Chinese New Year's celebrations in Newfoundland.

In addition to special guests, in the pre-1985 period most attendees of the Chinese New Year parties were Chinese residents in the St. John's area, who were invited via association newsletters or by phone calls. Kim Hong recalls,

In the early years, when we had our [Chinese] New Year's celebration, Chinese people came out like attending a family reunion event. Grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, children and grandchildren, everybody came. Let me give you an example. One year, I think that was either 1978 or 1979, we had our party at St. Mary's Church. There were over 700 people attending. I think we almost ran out of food. I asked Ted Hong, who was helping other people in the kitchen, "How many people do we have, Ted?" "Woo, about 700." And I was so foolish to ask, "How do you know?" He replied, "what do you mean how do I know? I was giving out plates." At the time, a majority of participants were Chinese. (Kim Hong 2011)

Chan Chau Tam also reports, "In the early years of the Chinese Association, everybody was very happy to attend the New Year's party. Most Chinese in St. John's came and some from small towns nearby also participated in our functions" (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Because of the large number of expected Chinese guests, the secretary of the Chinese Association, Margaret [Walsh] Chang told the reporter of the *Evening Telegram* that the event in 1978 was "closed to the general public with the exception of a select few" who would receive special invitations (*Evening Telegram*, February 11, 1978).

In recent years, Chinese New Year celebrations are still the biggest Chinese public gatherings in Newfoundland, serving as an important social place for Chinese people to socialize with acquaintances who they might see only once a year. Alick Tsui says, "I think that the Chinese New Year's party is still the only occasion that you can meet a big group of Chinese" (Alick Tsui 2012) Lili Wang also says that, "The first time when I saw a lot of Chinese after my arrival in Newfoundland was at the Chinese New Year's party. Today, attending the CANL New

Year's celebration is still the best way to meet more Chinese, especially those long-established Chinese" (Lili Wang 2012). Sometimes, Chinese New Year's celebrations are the only context where some Chinese interact with their co-ethnics scattered throughout different occupational and social domains. Tzu-Hao Hsu says, "The only way I meet other Chinese would be through big functions, most likely Chinese New Year celebrations of either the Chinese Association or the one on campus" (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). Chan Chau Tam also says, "In my daily life, I have more interaction with non-Chinese Newfoundlanders. But in some special occasions like Chinese New Year, I always participate into Chinese activities" (Chan Chau Tam 2012). In this sense, for many Chinese individuals, who are highly acculturated into local society and might have little communication with other Chinese people in their everyday lives, it is through festivals like Chinese New Year that bring them together and remind them of their identity of being "Chinese."

While Chinese New Year celebrations draw in a larger number of Chinese attendees than other gatherings, they are still outnumbered by non-Chinese guests (see Figure 44). As Alick Tsui observes, "At the party, I was so surprised to see very few Chinese. More were Caucasians" (Alick Tsui 2012). Lili Wang also finds that, "At the Chinese New Year's celebrations, I got an impression that more than 80% are Caucasians" (Lili Wang 2012). The increase on the percentage of non-Chinese at the party was more likely one of the consequences of the 1983 creation of an adult-only party on Saturdays that was apart from the family celebratory event on Sundays. After 1983, small children and some of their parents stopped attending the main celebration as did some restaurant owners and staff who were unable to attend because of their work commitments. The spots were soon filled by Chinese professionals and non-Chinese guests, who are often the friends or acquaintances of some active members of the Association like Kim

Hong and Betty Wong and these two groups gradually became the main participants of the celebration.



Figure 44: Audience at the 2011 CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration, St. John's.

The withdrawal of the Chinese population from this important Chinese festival is often interpreted as the result of the shifting of goals for the public celebration from celebrating with ethnic people to promoting ethnic presence and introducing ethnic cultural heritage to the larger community. Daniel Wong explains the reasons for reforming the local public Chinese New Year celebration:

At the beginning, we had only one party and all people –adults and kids- came together. It was good but there was a lot of chaos because many kids, from time to time, cried, screamed and walked around during the performance. I guess local people were somewhat reluctant to attend so that it was difficult for us to share our culture with local friends. Therefore, I formalized the celebration and developed one party into two. One on Saturday is more formal and adult only and the other is more traditional for Chinese families and kids. So basically, we introduce Chinese culture to Canadians on Saturday night and celebrate on our own on Sunday. We tried this new format in 1983 and it was quite successful so we keep it as our tradition. (Daniel Wong 2013)

Alick Tsui also mentions:

I think the mandate of the association is shifting from entertaining the Chinese population in Newfoundland to promoting Chinese culture and the existence of the Chinese Association as a cultural and social group. Therefore, the functions like Chinese New Year celebrations are meant to promote local Chinese culture to local non-Chinese Newfoundlanders to help them become aware that Chinese New Year is around in these days. That is why we don't have many Chinese participants. Many Chinese would like to go out for a meal with their families and close friends to celebrate the holidays in a more personal way. (Alick Tsui 2012)

Some people are more in favor of the changes. For example, E. T. Tjan comments: "I look at the Chinese New Year celebration as an effective way for intercultural communication" (E. T. Tjan 2012). Francis Tam shares the same point as Tjan: "Seeing more Caucasians in the party, I am so glad of that because we are doing our job to promote our culture. I would like to have more Caucasians at our parties. That will expand our culture and let people know more about it" (Francis Tam 2013). As a Caucasian spouse of a person of Chinese descent, Violet Ryan-Ping also feels satisfied "because years ago, we were not well mixed and right now the association brings us together" (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011). Some Chinese regret the choice of some other Chinese who do not attend the Chinese New Year's celebrations. Chan Chau Tam comments, "Those people who don't come to our New Year's parties are so childish. Chinese should have supported Chinese activities. Yes, maybe you don't like it but we are all Chinese so you should support us" (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Lili Wang also says, "When we go to the annual Chinese New Year's celebration, we can see that the majority of the audience members are non-Chinese. I guess they might think, 'Why you Chinese don't even come to your own celebration? It is your festival and it is your association. Why don't you support it?' I guess some people would look down upon Chinese because of this" (Lili Wang 2012).

In contrast, some Chinese have reservations about the changes of the Association's mandate and they doubt if the goal of cultural promotion is fulfilled. For example, Shinn Jia Hwang comments:

In recent years, we seldom participate into the New Year's celebrations of Chinese Association because we are not really interested in the event. It is not because of the food or performance or any other things like that. It is because the event seems to be organized for non-Chinese only. I don't mean that it is not good to have non-Chinese to attend this kind of cultural event. I mean the event has become an event for the sake of non-Chinese only and organizers don't really care if Chinese want to get involved. Nowadays, a lot of local people who have Chinese friends always ask for the tickets to go to the Chinese New Year's celebrations. I think they may find the food delicious or they may want to have ball dancing there. But, in my opinion, a lot of them have little interest in real Chinese culture and performance. However, a lot of tickets are sold to these people. So when Chinese try to buy tickets to go to their own event, they could not get any. Some people might say, "Why don't you book your tickets earlier?" I find it ridiculous. I think the right way to do is that, the Association should confirm how many Chinese are going to attend the event and reserve tickets for Chinese first. Extra tickets then can be purchased by non-Chinese. My wife and I went several times to support the Association but we were disappointed because the event didn't look like a celebration of Chinese New Year, rather, a common local gathering. It is not supposed to be a multicultural event but it is our event. (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012)

As an inseparable part of the new format of local Chinese New Year's celebration, the Family Fun Day (see Figure 45) on the day after the Dinner and Dance event seems to attract more Chinese to attend. As mentioned previously, according to Daniel Wong, the Family Fun Day is held for the benefit of Chinese families. Alick Tsui adds, "At the beginning, the Day was meant to give seniors an opportunity to see each other and for families to get together. Respect to seniors and holding family values are the core of Chinese culture and tradition" (Alick Tsui 2012). Lili Wang says, "I used to bring my kids to the Family Fun Day's party when they were younger and you could see a lot of Chinese families there" (Lili Wang 2012).



Figure 45: CANL's Family Fun Day at Gower Street United Church in 2008, St. John's. Courtesy of Alick Tsui.

Nowadays, the population of Chinese seniors and children is rapidly declining due to the fade-out of the older generation, emigration and low fertility rate so that the size of the Family Fun Day celebration is shrinking remarkably. For example, Kim Hong recalls, "Similar to the Christmas party that I mentioned earlier, in the 80s and 90s, you could easy to get 120 to 150 Chinese kids at the party. Now, you will be happy to see 1 or 2 dozen" (Kim Hong 2011). Currently, a majority of the attendees of the Family Fun Day are Chinese children adopted by local non-Chinese families. Violet Ryan-Ping observes, "In the Chinese Family Fun Day, most participants of the event are white families with adopted Chinese girls or mixed families like us. You don't see many Chinese go there and the same group of people all the time. You would see new white families with adopted Children because they want to make sure their children won't lose any of their cultural roots" (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011). It seems that the

Family Fun Day, which was first organized as a celebratory event within the Chinese community, has now gradually transformed into an educational event to reconnect younger people of Chinese descent with their ancestral culture, which is, to a large extent, absent in their daily life. In this sense, cultural introduction and promotion has become the main theme for both events –Dinner and Dance and Family Fun Day, which were initially held to serve more diverse purposes.

In addition to the shifting of event goals, I would suggest that the withdrawal of the Chinese population at both functions reflects the later festival organizers' stronger sense of being cultural wanderers who are different from older generation Chinese, especially those who immigrated before confederation. Instead of considering Chinese New Year as a group-based festival to highlight Chineseness in the collective sense, these newer generations decide to observe it as a personal event. Hence, festival organizers prefer not to engage their co-ethnics who they may not be familiar with, but are more motivated to bring their own friends and share their culture with them. The attendance of some Chinese to CANL's Chinese New Year's celebrations was due to invitations from other members with whom they had a close personal relationship. Pengfei Liu reports: "My wife and I used to go to the party in the first few years when we moved back to St. John's from Salty Pond in Burin Peninsula [southern part of Newfoundland] in early 2000. Not only did we attend, but also we performed two or three times for the event. The reason we went, to a large degree, was to support our friends like Lili Wang and Betty Wong. Otherwise, we wouldn't go because we don't really celebrate the festival and we don't even do anything at home" (Pengfei Liu 2013). In this sense, the decline of the Chinese population at CANL's Chinese New Year's functions is, to a large degree, the result of the determining dominance of the Chinese cultural wanderers as event organizers. In the same vein, as Kim Hong described earlier, the list of invited guests nowadays is shorter than in the beginning years and the

invitation has become symbolic. This change suggests that the benefit of the Chinese population in Newfoundland as a whole is no longer the major concern of the festival organizers who now put more of a focus on the pursuit of personal fulfilment and presentation of selfness.

Determining Entertainment

The entertainment part of each year's celebration is "officially" titled "a variety show" or "a multicultural show." As first highlighted in the program from 1977, this is not only the presentation of traditional Chinese culture but includes various performances from other cultures so that at times the show is difficult to recognize as Chinese. In addition to some traditional Chinese performances such as the lion dance, the Moon Light Flower Dance (1977), fan dance (1977), tea picking dance (1981), ribbon dance (1981), sword dance (1984), Chinese string instrument solo (1993) and umbrella dance (2007), audience members are also entertained by Thai classic dance (1977), Filipino sticking-lighting (1979), Indian Tabla Harmonium duet (1981), Filipino chicken dance (1981), Newfoundland folk songs (1981), Spanish dance (1981), Portuguese folk dance (1984), American modern dance (1984), Filipino Binasuan (1984), Newfoundland mummering (1984), the Hawaiian Hula Dance (1985), Korean Dance (1985) and Newfoundland step dance (1996).

Some attendees at the Chinese New Year celebrations might be confused about the theme of the event when Chinese tradition appears minimized. For example, the celebration in 1984 featured more acts from other multicultural groups than it did Chinese:

The highlight of the evening is the Chinese sword dance performed by Christopher Hong and Joyce Hong.... This evening's entertainment will include multicultural performances as well. The Association of Friends of Portugal will present Portuguese folk dances, the Judy Knee Dancers will present a short program of modern American dance, the Filipino Association of Newfoundland and Labrador will perform the

Binasuan –glass balancing – and the Newfoundland Mummers will perform the traditional capers of Newfoundland folk dance. (*Evening Telegram* February 4, 1984)

On top of this, Shirley Newhook, an announcer on CBC Television, was the master of ceremonies for the night (*Evening Telegram*, February 4, 1984). Given this line-up, many people might ask if the event still constitutes a Chinese celebration. A related question would be: why are performances of other ethnic groups brought to the Chinese New Year celebration?

A direct reason for the popularity of non-Chinese performances at annual Chinese New Year's celebrations is due to "the lack of local talents" (Kim Hong 2011). Kim Hong comments, "The talents of Chinese in the early days were very few because a lot of them came from poorer family backgrounds and had little education and training in vocal or instrumental performances." (Kim Hong 2011) Alick Tsui also says, "It is very difficult to get people to perform for us even if we don't really have any guidelines to screen the program. We would ask all people who want to perform to perform at the party. Many Chinese like me, who have been here for so long, have done so many performances although we are not professionally trained. For example, in 2003, I sang a song called 'Parents' Love,' which I just learnt from a karaoke party" (Alick Tsui 2012).

Apart from the shortage of human capital, the presentation of Chinese New Year celebrations as a multicultural variety show can be also attributed to organizers' aim to promote multiculturalism instead of solely highlighting Chineseness. Arguably, the presentation of various ethnic groups in combination with Chinese culture reflects the desire of organizers, representing many members of the Chinese community for acculturation and more social recognition. Kim Hong explains, "For every year's celebration, we have a program. In the beginning years, we tried to make it multicultural although they were Chinese New Year's celebrations, because, obviously, we were in the Canadian multicultural setting. Therefore, in addition to Chinese items, we also had performances from Indian, Korean and Japanese groups

and we invited local Newfoundland, Scottish, German and other groups to show their cultures and traditions at our parties” (Kim Hong 2011).

The working language used in Chinese New Year celebrations also reveals its distinct multicultural trait. Alick Tsui remarks, “I have a feeling that the Chinese New Year celebrations are primarily for non-Chinese. One piece of evidence for this is that they use English all the time and you can rarely hear any Chinese in a Chinese festival occasion. I found it weird at the beginning but now, I guess I got used to it and I even take the job of MC. But, I have to say, I found it really weird in the early days” (Alick Tsui 2012) (See Figure 46).²⁵



Figure 46: Tzu-Hao Hsu (left) and Alick Tsui (right), MCs of the 2011 CANL Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's.

In addition to the variety shows that are sometimes overloaded with multicultural performances, there are two other activities in the New Year events that also indicate the “destruction” of Chinese ethnicity perceived by some older generation Chinese individuals. As

²⁵ However, some evidence (e.g. a video of the 1988 Chinese New Year Celebration and the Family Fun Day, courtesy of Tam Chan Chau) suggests that, in the early days, at Family Fun Day parties, Chinese was the main language, although English translation was also available.

mentioned previously, in 1977, the main celebration started with the national anthem “O Canada” and ended with the provincial anthem “Ode to Newfoundland.” Kim Hong attributes the main reason for not singing the Chinese national anthem to the political conflict between mainland China and Taiwan. He explains:

At the beginning, at our major Chinese New Year celebrations which normally had hundreds of people attending, we sang “O Canada” at the beginning and “Ode of Newfoundland” at the end. There would be no Chinese anthems, because you might get in trouble if you did. Even if you did two, both the one of Mainland China and the one of Taiwan, the argument would also come to you like: why you do this first? So we decided, even though it was a Chinese association’s celebration, but more importantly, it was a Canadian multicultural setting, so we should get away from politics. Therefore, this was the routine. “O Canada” at the beginning and “Ode of Newfoundland” at the end. (Kim Hong 2009)

I would argue that the choice also reflects the new creolized Chineseness of the organizers to express not only their loyalty to their ancestral culture, but also their social and political affiliation to Newfoundland and Canada. Singing anthems along with other non-Chinese Canadian citizens is another confirmation that the Chinese have equal Canadian citizenship as their fellow Canadians.

In the entertainment section of Chinese New Year celebrations, the variety shows and anthem singing can be classified as the formal or semi-formal part of the whole event, which also includes an informal dance afterwards. Owe Ronstrom distinguishes the modes of inter-racial interaction in a multiculturalism-themed event:

First, was the *representative mosaic* of the stage performances, where the stereotype differences of the ethnic groups were foregrounded... Then came the ‘*dancing for everybody*,’ a mode in which ethnic differences were subdued and ‘that which unites’ was emphasized by the use of a repertoire people could perform without formal training, one that simultaneously was everyone’s and no-one’s. (Ronstrom 1993, 80-81)

According to Ronstrom, in the first mode, ethnicity is enacted and displayed through pre-designed ethnic markers including “physical attributes, clothing, instruments, sounds, melodies,

bearing, movements, and symbols” (Ronstrom 1993, 80). The majority of these markers such as lion dancing costumes, festival gowns and traditional Chinese instruments presented in the variety show section are removed in the second mode, in which a common identity for all attendees is temporally constructed to reach a “cultural truce.”

The introduction and later extension (after 1983) of the dance does not satisfy some Chinese who have a different vision of the presentation of Chinese New Year celebrations, which, according to them, should have been more “traditional.” Shinn Jia Hwang says, “Personally, I am not interested in ball dancing and I don’t think that it can represent our Chinese culture. Of course, you can always have a ball dance party but I don’t think it is proper to do at our party. Every time we have our New Year’s celebration, many people come for the dance, but what about the people like us who do not dance? What should we do in that situation?” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). In the same vein, an interview conducted by Thomson in 1983, one of her interviewees expressed similar but more open opinion on the ball dancing at the Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland:

[I]t’s becoming more and more Western. Like for example on New Year, they’ll have a dance in the evening for adults, which, of course, in the Chinese tradition, the whole family would be completely involved morning, noon, and night; so you get into even western music being performed for a dance at night....[In] the first couple of years, there was no dancing, at least not on a structured basis with regard to having a hall fired out and music arranged. The past five or six years this tends to, intend to make it more popular, and as a result, of course, they get whiter, or Western people attending this as well, which means that, there. My feeling is, anyway, that as a result of them bring here, it’s a good way of integrating with the community, with the local community.” (Thomson 1993, 226)

However, as a matter of fact, ball dancing, instead of being a western cultural marker, has become an important part of the social life of many Chinese couples. Alick Tsui says, “Many Chinese, no matter where you are from, Hong Kong, Taiwan or mainland China, love social

dancing and there is also a Chinese dance instructor Ted in Newfoundland, who, originally from Taiwan, teaches a lot of Chinese” (Alick Tsui 2012). Lili Wang and her husband Hu Liu usually go to a variety of dancing parties throughout the week. Hum Mei Tam and Rennies So also regularly invite the Chinese dance instructor Ted to their restaurant for dancing lessons.

On the one hand, Chinese New Year celebrations have been North Americanized as a multicultural event; but, on the other hand, festival organizers still attempt to present the event with more Chinese cultural elements. In 1981, a “Chinese Cultural Festival” was held to comprehensively introduce Chinese culture, including the introduction of the famous Forbidden City in Beijing, the cultural meaning and importance of the lotus in Chinese tradition, various Chinese instruments, Chinese silk products and other artistic articles (Regina McBride’s column, *Evening Telegram*, February 10, 1981). In the form of a western beauty pageant contest, Peter Hing, who was the treasure of CANL from 1983-1984, organized the first (and only) Miss Chinese Association of Newfoundland Pageant (Peter Hing 2014). In recent years, although the length of performative entertainment has been shortened, the cut part is the section of non-Chinese performances. In other words, traditional Chinese performances are kept and to some degree, well maintained. Alick Tsui notes, “We always try our best to get Chinese to perform at our parties and we also encourage all performers to sing in Chinese, play Chinese musical instruments and perform traditional dances” (Alick Tsui 2012). In some cases, some performers were local born Chinese or were not trained to play Chinese instruments, but they are frequently asked to perform “Chinese” for the events. Lili Wang says, “We always have some piano and violin performers playing each year at our New Year’s celebrations. Many of them are local born so that they have limited knowledge about Chinese musical tradition. Frequently, we encourage

them to perform some Chinese pieces and many of them would learn some for our events” (Lili Wang 2012).

Sometimes, when Chinese performers or performances are not locally accessible, organizers turn to governmental or non-profit organizations for financial support to invite performers and performances from outside of Newfoundland. For example, in 1982, sponsored by the Department of Secretary of State of Canada, CANL invited The Montreal Society of Chinese Performing Arts to present various classical Chinese dances on January 22 and 23 at Bishop Field’s Auditorium on Bond Street as a part of the Chinese New Year Celebration. According to the program, the dances included: Feather Fan Dance, Butterfly Dance, Mermaid Dance, Sword Dance, Peacock Dance, Beautiful Southern Country Dance, Meo Cup Dance, Chopstick Dance, Umbrella Dance, Ribbon Dance, Lantern Dance and Mongolian Dance. Lili Wang says, “What performance we can provide to our audience depends on what we can find. We have such a small population, so in earlier years, the association did invite some performers from Montreal and Toronto to come and perform. But that was because the association received some funds from the Canadian Federal Government” (Lili Wang 2012). Arthur Leung also says, “I was asked to help organize the annual Chinese New Year celebrations, which are held to keep and promote our Chinese culture. We don’t want to lose it. So we always want to get more traditional performances to show local Newfoundlanders. Sometimes, we could not find anybody locally, so we have to throw in a proposal to some sources, mostly Canadian Heritage to ask for grants to invite performers. If we have good proposals, it is very possible to get several thousand dollars. Then we can use the money to get some people to come over” (Arthur Leung 2012).

In addition to formal performances, organizers try to introduce Chinese dancing music to ball dancing. Alick Tsui says:

I have talked to the DJ and asked him to play some Chinese tunes for ball dancing. I think it doesn't make sense that there is no Chinese music at the party even if for the ball dancing. The DJ told me that he had no idea about this type of Chinese music and I told him I would find something for him. It would be awesome if we could have some Chinese music for dancing at the Chinese New Year celebrations. I remember that, when I was in England, Chinese music was always played at the ball of Chinese New Year events. Also, I don't think people care what music is played when they are dancing, so why don't we play Chinese music? I don't want to play too much western tunes because it is Chinese New Year. We need to present more Chinese culture. (Alick Tsui 2012)

It seems that after the multiculturalization of the Chinese New Year celebrations in the earlier years, the current trend indicates a cultural return to the more "traditional" Chinese track. At the beginning, through the multicultural presentation, the Chinese were transformed from the alien or foreign to the *ethnic*, which Yeh defines as "a cultural group whose mere difference from" white society was culture, "so that they could assimilate into the dominant society" (Yeh 2008, 6). The New Year variety shows offer a reassurance that all groups have culture and they also place those cultures on the same footing.

Yeh's interpretation echoes Ellen Litwicki's (2000) idea of a new form of assimilation or, in her case, Americanization. Litwicki challenges the "classic sense" of assimilating and argues that to become Americans, immigrants can only show the general American public how their heritage and values "were congruent with American culture and so need not be discarded," instead of abandoning their traditions (Litwicki 2000, 115). She continues, "On ethnic holidays immigrants and their children did not simply create ethnic national identities; they constructed versions of ethnic Americanism. Their ethnicity informed the way they constructed American identity, but their understanding of American culture and values also shaped their identity" (Litwicki 2000, 115).

Applying Litwicki's theory of assimilation to the public Chinese New Year celebrations in Newfoundland suggests that the festivities do not attempt to encourage Chinese residents to stick

to old world's traditions, but rather help assure the city at large that the Chinese and their culture are not a threat to Newfoundland society and its culture. The variety shows present the Chinese as part of a local multicultural mosaic which includes a range of ethnic groups who align with Chinese on the stage to celebrate the same festival. In this sense, participation in the Chinese New Year event is an expression of support for national and provincial policies of multiculturalism. Displaying one's heritage publically becomes a contribution to the broader community. Litwicky writes, "If loyalty to one's homeland made one a better citizen, then perpetuating the traditions and culture of the homeland became an imperative of good...citizenship" of the host country (Litwicky 2000, 142). If ethnicity cannot be discarded during the process of acculturation, then the challenge becomes how to express it in a way that fits into the social and political contexts of local mainstream society. The pursuit of returning to a more "traditional" way of presentation does not aim to challenge the formerly set structure but to negotiate the possibilities to accommodate broader expectations of people from a variety of groups. Kim Hong says, "We organize Chinese New Year celebrations for the purpose to promote multiculturalism and to present Chinese ideas to be good neighbors, to be good citizens and to be good fellows who appreciate Canada. At the same time, we also promote Chinese culture and hopefully your children and grandchildren would learn something and preserve something" (Kim Hong 2009). Hong's words perfectly present the ideas of cultural wanderers on Chineseness in the Newfoundland context.

Selecting Food

Food, consciously or unconsciously, is frequently placed as the first attraction of a festival or other social gathering because "It is difficult to think of a festival that does not have some type

of food component” (Humphrey and Humphrey 1988, 10). As Humphrey and Humphrey comment, sharing food and drink is an effective way to “acknowledge our commitment and relationship with each other” (Humphrey and Humphrey 1988, xi). As an important aspect of Chinese New Year celebrations, food is elaborately prepared and presented by the Chinese Association and other food providers to cater to potential festival attendees with various taste preferences and dietary restrictions. Kim Hong recalls, “At the beginning, we normally have some basic dishes for the Chinese New Year’s parties. We had barbecued pork, chicken fried rice, sweet and sour pork and some noodles. I remember I asked restaurant people to cook gung ding instead of chop suey because bean sprouts would not be crispy if they had been cooked for a while. We also had Caesar salad” (Kim Hong 2009). Of these dishes, the salad has a clear western origin; the others are all North American style Chinese food instead of other versions of Chinese cuisine.

Compared with the banquets hosted by the Chinese Association, festival goes to the 1979 Chinese New Year celebration organized by the former Chinese Student Society enjoyed a more elaborate meal:

This was certainly the case in the delectable seven-course Chinese dinner that was served, which consisted of roast duck, spiced chicken Jai doo Guy, B.B.Q pork served with a traditional bean cake; broccoli and beef, Cantonese Chop Suey, Yeung Chow fried rice and Chinese style sweet and sour pork. Woo Loong tea and fortune cookies were also served. (*Evening Telegram* January 30, 1979)

Similar to the dishes Jean Edwards Stacey described in the *Evening Telegram* in 1999 -“chicken, duck, fish and dumplings stuffed with pork” (*The Telegram*, February 16, 1999) - the entrees listed in the above were not served in buffet-style but on tables to be shared by diners at the same table. This serving style, along with more Chinese-flavored dishes, was also adopted by the organizers of the Chinese Association in some years. For example, in 1993, the whole meal

included: spring rolls, deep fried shrimp balls, lemon chicken, scallop broccoli, shrimp ding, B.B.Q duck, sweet and sour pork and rainbow fried rice, which were cooked by Allen Lau, the current owner of the Hong Kong Restaurant.

In recent years, my fieldwork suggests that after the parties were relocated to the Royal Canadian Legion (#56) in late 1990s, dinners at Chinese New Year have been dominated by North American Chinese food such as spring rolls, lemon chicken, sweet and sour pork, chicken guy ding, fried noodles and fried rice and some locally well accepted Chinese food like B.B.Q pork and deep-fried dim sum (see Figure 47 and 48). More traditional Chinese festival specialties such as whole fish, as people usually have in their households, are rarely served at New Year's celebrations. The history of catering at the Chinese New Year celebrations indicates a continuous negotiation between patrons of different traditions of Chinese foodways. However, the result of the negotiation shows that the North American version is more dominant in the choice of food.

However, some Chinese argue that the presentation of Chinese foodways at the New Year's parties is unable to achieve the goal of inter-group communication. Simon Tam says,

I don't think the food at the New Year's celebration can show people how good Chinese food can be. As I heard from other people, the appetizers were much better than the main course dishes because they were more Chinese. I actually don't mind to pay 10 dollars more to get some other type of food instead of noodles we had there, sweet and sour pork and fried rice which you can get in any Chinese takeouts and restaurants. They are not special and, to some degree, not even Chinese. They are North American Chinese food. So I said, I don't mind to pay 10 dollars more to get more traditional Chinese food, especially in this kind of special occasion. (Simon Tam 2012)

Some Chinese consider the quality of food as one of the reasons why Chinese people are reluctant to attend the New Year's celebrations. Lili Wang comments, "Many people feel that it is not worth it to pay 35 dollars to have a meal like that" (Lili Wang 2012). Likewise, Alick Tsui reports, "A lot of people are not interested in attending our functions because they think they can have a better meal somewhere else" (Alick Tsui 2012).



Figure 47: Appetizer (Spring Rolls, BBQ Pork, Shrimp Balls and Pickled Veggies) at the CANL's Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Region in 2011, St. John's.



Figure 48: Food at CANL's 2007 Chinese New Year Celebration at Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's. Courtesy of Alick Tsui.

Theodore Humphrey and Lin Humphrey describe the food served at festivals as a performance of a community's "values, assumptions, world views and prescriptive behaviors" which are constantly adjusted in various celebratory contexts, which determine how food is prepared and presented (Humphrey and Humphrey 1988, 3). The dominance of North American Chinese style food at the Chinese New Year celebration is often seen as the result of the considerable percentage of "outsiders" who might be afraid of trying exotic cuisines. Perhaps, more importantly, I would argue that the choice of food at the Chinese New Year celebrations reflects the scope of Chinese festival organizers about their perceptions on their ethnicity and its presentations. As discussed above, Chinese New Year celebrations are organized to promote a

creolized Chineseness; therefore, presenting “authentic” Chinese foodways is not a priority of the organizers. The consumption of North American style Chinese food which presenting a sense of both the local and the Chinese, to some degree, provides Chinese festival organizers and attendees identified as cultural wanderers with an opportunity to express their version of Chineseness. At the same time, the choice of those individuals who do not attend the celebrations due to the style of food reflects the competition of various Chinese culinary traditions, which are associated with different definitions of Chineseness.

Conclusion

Much of what Stephen Stern writes in his milestone article on ethnic folklore and the folklore of ethnicity applies to the celebration of Chinese New Year in Newfoundland. He writes:

a means to revitalize floundering ethnic communities by promoting ethnic distinctiveness in the face of the ‘acculturative’ forces that impinge on ethnic continuity. Because the ethnic festival (which includes displays of costumes, cuisine, dances, parades, and art works) draws its format from mainstream culture, it blends ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ expressive activities and the ethnic thereby asserts his right to make contemporary concerns relevant to his own ethnicity. Since the ethnic festival is a short-term celebration, it compacts ethnic expression into a ritualistic, cathartic event in which individuals become, for the moment, totally absorbed in ethnic culture. This intensification marks the qualitative difference between old and new forms of ethnic expression (Stern 1977, 29).

So far, I have discussed how Chinese New Year in Newfoundland was/is celebrated as an ethnic and small scale festival and as a public and widely participated local event with various cultural expressions. Based on my investigation, the first and second waves of Chinese immigrants, who were mostly from the coastal part of southern China, because of various political, social and cultural reasons, celebrate Chinese New Year mostly in private with a group of their peers who might be related to each other by kinship or shared regional identity under the leadership of some

prominent community leaders. Although many of these older generation Chinese individuals chose not to continue their festive celebration when their working schedule had been conflicting with festival time, their choice of not celebrating still suggested a strong attachment to their sense of Chineseness as represented by their work ethics. Since the late 1970s, some new generation Chinese individuals, who were mainly locally born or raised, with the auspice of the governmental guidelines and the larger community, started to promote Chinese New Year celebrations in the public sphere. This new generation, recognized as cultural wanderers, used Chinese New Year celebrations to claim their different understanding of Chineseness, which was a creolized version of the ethnicity combining the loyalty to the ancestral culture and the adaption of vernacular understanding. In the next chapter, I will continue the discussion of different cultural expressions of Chineseness perceived by different Chinese subgroups and individuals via the performance of Chinese lion dance in Newfoundland.

Chapter Six

Performing Chineseness: The Lion Dance in Newfoundland

This chapter is an ethnographic examination of Chinese lion dancing, which illustrates cultural processes of retention, adaptation and invention within Newfoundland's Chinese community. In this chapter, I explore how the performative practices of lion dancers and the perceptions of audience members of Chinese descent conceptualize the ideas of historical authenticity (recovering the details of the original/traditional performance of specific historical periods) and personal authenticity (presenting performers' own internal feelings and understanding when performing) and reflect their understanding of their cultural identities.

The Chinese lion dance often involves two players, one positioned in front as the lion's head and the other in the back as its body. Wearing a stylized lion-like costume, two performers dance or move like a lion by following rhythmic music with a changeable melody to the accompaniment of some Chinese instruments such as Chinese drum, gongs and cymbals. According to the findings of my fieldwork, the local lion dance is a key aspect of Chinese Newfoundlanders' multiple and often competing constructions of identity. All lion puppets (approximately 7) used in Newfoundland are owned by the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (CANL). The CANL purchased the first lion puppet (which was a rainbow-colored lion) along with accompanying musical instruments from Hong Kong in 1977 and since 1978 the lion dance performance has been a part of annual Chinese New Year Shows and other cultural performances. A dynamic part of the ritual, festival and celebratory life of the Chinese community in Newfoundland, the lion dance occurs at "the juncture of the social and the performative" (Slovenz[-Low] 1994, xii-xiii).

Lion Dance and the Identity of Chinese Diasporic Communities

An early discussion of Chinese lion dance appears in William Hoy's article "Native Festivals of the California Chinese," in which the lion dance is considered as "an integral part of the New Year's festivities," to represent Chinese identity in San Francisco area (Hoy 1948). Although the lion dance is frequently the most explicit and important symbol of Chinese culture in overseas Chinese communities, because of its close association with Chinese festivals and other social and cultural events, especially the Chinese New Year, it has not often been an independent research focus. It has only been since the 1980s that researchers began to consider this traditional performance more seriously.

Some researchers have explored the history of Chinese lion dance. According to Wan-Yu Liu, lions, which are not indigenous in China, were first brought in as precious gifts by foreign ambassadors from Middle-Eastern countries to the emperor of China, Han Wu Ti 汉武帝 in 140-70 B.C. during the Han Dynasty 汉朝 (206 B.C -220 A.D.) through the Silk Road 丝绸之路 which bridged China and the West in ancient times (Liu 1981, 14-15). Heleanor Feltham traces the origin of Chinese lion dance to the introduction of lion images from the Middle East, particularly Sasanian Persia through the Silk Road (Feltham 2007, 2009 and 2010). However, some scholars, such as Patricia Matusky and Tan Sooi Beng (2004), draw on oral narratives to suggest that lion dancing dates from a later historical period. Matusky and Tan push the date a few hundred years back to the Tang Dynasty 唐朝 (618-907 A.D.). They believe that lions were given to the Chinese emperor by the Persians (Matusky and Tan 2004, 152).

Wan-Yu Liu (1981) and William C. Hu (1995) attempt to probe other technical and cultural aspects of the lion dance as it is performed in China, such as the differences between the northern

and southern styles, costumes, moving steps and performing skills. In the same vein, as Feltham points out, the lion dance is more than “an object of material culture” featuring “both the physicality of the costumes and the performance.” It also incorporates “the mythologies, cultural and social significance and deeper resonances which underlie and sustain the dance as event” (Feltham 2009, 106).

As an inseparable part of Chinese festive and celebratory life, the lion dance was brought along with other cultural elements, such as foodways and ancestral worship rituals by immigrants to their new settlements (e.g. see: Margret Rose Wai Wah Chan 2001; Mei-Hsiu Chan 2001; Feltham 2007, 2009; Hoe 1984; Johnson 2005b; Liu 1981; Matusky and Tan 2004; Raulin 1991, Slovenz[-Low] 1987, 1991 and 1994; and Tan 2007). In regard to the importance of the lion dance in overseas Chinese communities, Feltham writes, “carried by migrating southern Chinese communities to new and alien homes such as Australia, the USA, Canada and Southeast Asia, the lion dance gained emotive weight as a cultural mnemonic, establishing itself within evolving overseas communities as a cultural marker...” (Feltham 2009, 131). In some countries (such as Malaysia and Indonesia) where Chinese traditional practice was thought to be a cultural threat to the national identity, the lion dance “symbolizes the protection of Chinese culture and identity, particularly when pro-assimilationist policies are predominant” (Tan 2007, 66). After cultural bans against Chinese culture were removed, “the lion dance in particular was selected for revival. Just as the lion was the defender of religion and protector of the community, the lion dance represented the protection and survival of Chinese culture” (Tan 2007, 66). Similarly, Sean Metzger examines how the lion dance, as a corporeal instead of linguistic presentation avoids “the tricky polarization of the English/French debates that occupy municipal discourse” and showcases Chinese ethnicity in Montreal’s Chinatown (Metzger 2011, 95).

In terms of the transnational transmission of the lion dance, some scholars such as Wan-Yu Liu (1981) and Ban Seng Hoe (1984) look at lion dances performed in new societies where Chinese immigrants settled as a direct cultural transplantation without significant changes, especially the performances in Chinese enclaves like Chinatowns in major North American cities. Other researchers highlight distinctive vernacular elements that are added to the traditional lion dance when it is performed in overseas Chinese communities, for example, Madeline Anita Slovenz-Low studies traditional Cantonese lion dance performances in order to understand the social life of the Chinese community in New York City from an outsider's point of view (Slovenz-Low 1991, 1994). She argues that the lion dance is a "truly popular contemporary Cantonese American Performance expression that is practiced by Chinese immigrants and fully acculturated American-born Chinese" instead of "an exotic remnant from China's feudalistic past" (Slovenz-Low 1994, xiii). Likewise, Malaysian ethnomusicologist Tan Sooi Beng notes that in overseas Chinese communities, the lion dancers often create new performances (Tan 2007).

Innovations and changes in the traditional Chinese lion dance in overseas Chinese communities are visible in trans-generational transmission processes. In many communities, the lion dance has been widely used as an effective approach to educate younger, mostly local born people of Chinese descent about Chinese tradition and provide them an opportunity to experience Chinese culture. For example, Henry Johnson's study of the Chinese lion dance team of Macleans College in the ward of Howich in Auckland, New Zealand, shows that performing the lion dance is "central in the performers' construction of Chinese cultural identity in the New Zealand context," and "through this performance art," performers "negotiate a place for

themselves in contemporary multicultural New Zealand –individually and collectively” (Johnson 2005b, 174).

Second- or later- generation Chinese dancers have various motivations. Writing of her lion dance workshop in Dallas, Texas, Mei-Hsiu Chan feels that her students are less motivated to learn the lion dance than use digital media: “They would have preferred probably to spend their afternoons settled before a Nintendo game, television, video or DVD player, or computer games” (Mei-Hsiu Chan 2001, 139). Even though they are interested in the dance, Heleanor B. Feltham also finds that, “Many younger students are more concerned with the sports/martial arts aspects of lion dancing, than with cultural modes and traditional meanings” (Feltham 2009, 128). Therefore, Johnson reminds us “how host country context can help shape cultural identity, especially a rediscovery of homeland culture” (Johnson 2005b, 185). In this sense, because there are many ways to interpret Chineseness, “Lion dancing is not inscribed with a singular meaning; its performance produces meaning” (Slovenz[-Low] 1994, 4).

The lion dance as a cultural marker of Chinese ethnicity reflects the idea of “cultural performance,” coined by Milton Singer. As Singer writes, cultural performances are “taken as the most concrete observable units of the cultural structure” of outsiders and cultural insiders (Singer 1959 xiii). Richard Bauman further explains that cultural performances “are cultural forms about culture, social forms about society, in which the central meanings and values of a group are embodied, acted out, and laid open to examination and interpretation in symbolic form, both by members of that group and by the ethnographer” (Bauman 1986, 133).

According to Singer’s theory, each performance includes (1) a limited time span, (2) a beginning and end, (3) an organized program of activity, (4) a set of performers and an audience and (5) a place and occasion of performance (Singer 1959, xiii). Richard Schechner develops

Singer's theory and treats performance in a more comprehensive way to identify ways in which its effects extend further in time and space than the limits of the performance proper. Schechner describes a "seven-part whole performance process" that considers performance inclusive of training, workshop, rehearsal, warm-up, the show itself, cool down and aftermath (Schechner 1985, 16-21).

Victor Turner moved beyond the description of constitutive elements to explore the reflective and reflexive aspects of cultural performances and look at how cultural meanings are created and transmitted. As reflective, Turner argues that all senses (in his words, "sensory codes") including vision, taste, smell and touch, are employed in cultural performances to communicate the content of culture (Turner 1981, 158). Turner explains reflexivity as what "a sociocultural group turns, bends, reflects back on itself upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statues, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other components that make up their public selves;" therefore, cultural performances function reflexively as "active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs for living'" (Turner 1988, 24).

Turner's theory of reflexive cultural performances indicates that cultural performances are capable of embracing changes, new creations and even conflicting perceptions of cultural meanings. Building on Turner's insights, scholars in the field of performance studies have explored the concept of performative reflexivity. For example, Dwight Conquergood considers performance as a public site of struggles "where competing interests interact, and different viewpoints and voices get articulated" (Conquergood 1989, 84). In the same vein, Michelle A. Holling and Bernadette M. Calafell also look at cultural performances as dialogues that bring

together various voices, worldviews, value systems and beliefs and they are aware that the conversation is open to ongoing discussions without conclusions (Holling and Calafell 2007). Finally, David Guss writes that cultural performances remain both contentious and ambiguous, and the meaning of each performance is redirected when enough changes are implemented although the basic structure may be repeated (Guss 2000). The following sections take up these ideas in their examination of how lion dancers in Newfoundland, holding multiple viewpoints of their identities of being Chinese, perform their own versions of “Chinese lion dance.” I reflect on how individuals of Chinese descent perceive the role of the “Chinese lion dance” in playing their various and sometimes conflicting collective/individual ethnicity(-ies).

From China to Canada: The Revival of an Old Tradition in Newfoundland

The Pearl River Delta 珠三角 in Canton Province, China, as mentioned earlier, was the hometown of a majority of early Chinese settlers in Newfoundland, Canada before 1967. It is also the birth place of southern Chinese martial arts and the Cantonese lion dance.²⁶ Outside of Canton, the lion dance, as a traditional and ceremonial Chinese folk dance, is also popular in Hong Kong and some overseas communities with large population of Cantonese immigrants. Heleanor Feltham notes that, by the nineteenth century, “the lion dance had become an important part of both urban and village culture in the coastal cities and provinces of southern China”

²⁶ The Cantonese lion dance, which is also called the southern lion dance, is the main form performed in Newfoundland. It is also widespread in Chinese diasporic communities in North American and other places around the world (Johnson 2005b; Liu 1981 and Slovenz[low] 1987, 1991 and 1994). Compared to the costume of the northern style, with less fur and no mane, the costume of the southern style (the Cantonese style) is more distant from the image of a real lion. In addition, dancers of the southern style do not wear the matched fur-decorated pants, which imitate the lion’s legs; rather, they often perform in wearing plain gym clothes or martial arts outfits. However, the abstraction makes the southern lion more aggressive (Matusky and Tan 2004, 152). Moreover, because of the body of the southern lion is bigger and longer with more and brighter colors, it is often thought to contain more “strength, agility and power of energy.” (Matusky and Tan 2004, 152) In this chapter, the difference between northern-style lion dance and southern-style lion dance is not emphasized because only southern style lion dance is performed in Newfoundland. In addition, according to my interviewees, at present, performers of both traditions mutually adopt skills / costumes from each other and the boundary between the two is blurred.

(Feltham 2009, 113). She further asserts that, “lion dance teams were at the heart of the traditional Cantonese speaking villages of Southern China” (Feltham 2009, 117).

Kim Hong, who came to Newfoundland in 1950 from Toisan, Canton, observed the popularity of lion dancing in southern part of China before his arrival in Canada:

Many Chinese, who immigrated here [Newfoundland], were from the southern part of China and they came from small towns or villages, where lion dance was a popular event all year round. There were lessons given in those villages to teach people the lion dance and kung fu. Some Chinese people in Newfoundland actually learnt how to play lions and also kung fu before they came (Kim Hong 2011).

One of those elders, Billy Hong says, “In 1940s, I learned lion dancing in my hometown. It was a tradition and all the boys were interested” (Billy Hong 2013). According to some recent immigrants, lion dancing is still popular in the same region. For example, Joseph Mo says, “the lion dance in my home village has been performed for so many years and people still play it in these days. I am one of those people who really love to see the lion dance. Every time when I heard the noise, no matter what I was doing, I would stop everything and go to watch” (Joseph Mo 2013). Many immigrants from Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong were also very familiar with lion dancing before their emigration. Chan Chau Tam says, “I often saw lion dances on the street in Hong Kong. Sometimes I also went to Kung Fu clubs to watch their practice. It was always interesting to me. Over the years, I learned a little bit from what I saw and heard” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

After the foundation of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the southern lion dance was immediately introduced to the community upon the request of many of the association’s members, a majority of whom were from Canton or Hong Kong (Kim Hong 2011). The first lion puppet and corresponding musical instruments were bought in Hong Kong. The drum, gong and cymbals currently used in lion dancing are still the same set of instruments

bought in the 1970s. The whole set of equipment arrived in Newfoundland in May 1977 and it was first displayed in public at the post-Flower Service garden party in August of the same year (see Figure 49 and 50). Kim Hong recalls:

We got the lion in May 1977. We first showed it to our members at our summer party because a lot of our members who were not from St. John's came to the city to attend the flower service. The summer party was held at the gym and grounds of Beaconsfield High School. In the early days, people usually got together after Flower Service to eat, chat and do some sports like basketball and volleyball. But in 1977, we got the lion to show people. Lion dance was new to the association so all people would like to see it. Before we brought in the lion dance, there was nothing to show people, especially those who were born and raised here, what Chinese culture was about (Kim Hong 2011).



Figure 49: Lion Puppet at the 1977's CANL Garden Party at the Beaconsfield High School's Gym (the person in the middle of the court is Kim Hong). Courtesy of Kim Hong.



Figure 50: Lion Puppet at the 1977's CANL Garden Party at the Beaconsfield High School's Play Ground (Ming Hong – Drum, Yin Hai Gin –Gong and Jim Mah –Cymbals). Courtesy of Kim Hong.

Kim Hong remembers, “The stuff including musical instruments were brought to the garden party for exhibition purpose, but when people saw them, they started to play them in turns. All people were happy when they were performing and watching” (Kim Hong 2011). Since the 1977’s summer party, Chinese (Cantonese) lion dance has been performed for nearly 40 years.

Historical Authenticity: The Cultural Roots and Early Lion Dancers

Many scholars associate the color difference of lion costumes (head and body) with the warriors in a popular Chinese historical novel named *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* 三国演义 which was first printed in 16th century (Mei-Hsiu Chan 2001, Hoe 1984, Matusky and Tan 2004, and Slovenz[-Low] 1994). For instance, Patricia Matusky and Tan Sooi Beng explain the symbolism of the costumes as follows:

The head of the southern lion is associated with the four characters from the *Three Kingdoms* story. A head coloured yellow and black with a white beard depicts Liu Bei, who is remembered as a kind and generous person, while a head coloured red and black with a black beard depicts Guan Ti who is known for his honesty. The black and white lion head with a black beard is associated with Zhang Fei, a general who is famous because of his braveness, and a multi-colored lion head with a white beard is associated with Zhao Zi Lung, famous for his cleverness and wisdom. (Matusky and Tan 2004, 152-153)

However, the first lion costume in Newfoundland, which is unable to perfectly fit in this metaphoric system, is categorized as a rainbow lion which was painted in a variety of colors such as red, green, blue, black, white and pink (see Figure 51). In order to explore the origins of the rainbow costume, I consulted Master Lat Yip, a famous artist and lion dance sifu 師傅 (master/instructor) in Toronto. He recognized all those lion costumes in Newfoundland as traditional (Lat Yip 2012). However, instead of using the existing classification system, he

challenged the system itself and considered the connections between historical characters and the colors of lion costumes as flexible and sometimes arbitrary.



Figure 51: The CANL's Rainbow lion. Courtesy of Kim Hong.

The basic frame of the lion's head was made of bamboo and the surface was made of materials like cloth, satin, and paper-mache. The lion's head was round-shaped with a big mouth and big eyes. In terms of the shape of the lion mask, traditionally, there are two major types of mask in Cantonese lions - Buddha mountain style (佛山式) and crane mountain style (鹤山式).

The Buddha mountain style features "its round-shaped head, big mouth, big eyes and pointed horn root;" the crane mountain characterizes "its oval-shaped head, small mouth, long eyes and fat-rounded horn root" (Liu 1981, 61). My observations indicate that lion masks used in Newfoundland's lion dance group can be categorized as the Buddha mountain style. The lion's body looked like a satin cloak with the same patterned design as the head in color and texture. In addition to the lion puppet, a mask of a teaser, which is a human character, a big head Buddha, in

lion dancing to “play” with the lion, was also purchased.²⁷ The mask was an oversized roundish paper-mache head which was able to completely cover the dancer’s head. It was designed as a smiley obese face of with a big nose, large black eyes and blue hair (see Figure 52). The availability of costumes and accompanying musical instruments called for experienced dancers and musicians to perform.



Figure 52: The Big Head Buddha (left). Courtesy of Kim Hong.

In the 1970s, with a few exceptions such as Daniel Wong, an engineer, and Jim Mah, a student at the time, the dancers were mostly involved in the restaurant business. For example, David Chiu was a cook at the time and later owned the Red Pepper Restaurant in St. John’s.

²⁷ In the legend that Matusky and Tan’s theory is based on, it is said that the lions were tamed for entertainment by a monk upon the command of the emperor (Matusky and Tan 2004, 152). In addition, the story also indicates that the role of the Buddhist monk is a critical part of the lion dancing. Matusky and Tan’s legend thus reveals a close relationship between lion dancing and Buddhism. More specifically, lion masks are similar to the images of lions in ancient Buddhist decorations and paintings (Feltham 2007, 2009 and Liu 1981), in which lions are generally portrayed as guardians or as mounts with wide-open mouths, fan-like ears, big eyes and horns on the top center of the foreheads. Therefore, in consideration of the similarities between the lions in the dance and those in Buddhism, Liu confidently says that, “We can be quite sure that the later development of the lion dance mask has been influenced directly or indirectly by the appearance of the guardian tomb animals” (Liu 1981, 30).

Chung Lem was also a cook and later opened a restaurant in Harbour Grace. Some of these dancers were entrenched in Chinese (Cantonese) tradition and had opportunities to become familiar with the cultural and social meanings of the lion dance. For example, Daniel Wong is the fifth generation direct disciple of Wong Fei Hung (黄飞鸿), the most famous grand master of Chinese kung fu and lion dancing. Chung Lem, as Kim Hong says, “learned his kung fu in Hong Kong when he was a young man.” (Kim Hong 2011) Daniel Wong recounts, “In 1972, Chung Lem and I competed our kung fu with the head coach and another chief coach of the Karate club at Memorial University. We won!” (Daniel Wong 2013). However, other performers, who were not professionally trained, had limited knowledge of the performance. Chan Chau Tam says, “At the beginning, what we did was quite simple. We just held the lion’s head and did up-and-down and up-and-down. We didn’t really know too much” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

The lion dance in Canton is not only a set of choreographic movements, but also a form of art, which has been transmitted across generations. Daniel Wong, says, “Lion dancing is an art. It is not a series of randomly physical actions. If people really want to understand it, they must know the culture behind it and the meaning of each movement” (Daniel Wong 2013). Similar to other forms of traditional Chinese art, the lion dance highlights some basic principles in relation to the Cantonese society and individuals. Joseph Mo says:

I learned that, things like respect, intelligence and loyalty to your village and neighborhood are the core of lion dance. In lion dancing, there are different types of lions and you have to perform them differently. In particular, the black lion is the fighting lion, the king of lions. Not everyone is qualified to play it. Only those people who are intelligent in arts and literature and excellent in kung fu can perform black lions. All other lions have to bow to black lions when they first encounter. In terms of other lions, some of them are used for entertainment only, so everybody can play. All these rules teach people the importance of being an intelligent person who will receive respects from others. In addition, when a lion from one village or neighborhood tries to walk through another village or neighborhood, it has to complete some challenging literary and physical tasks before it gets the permission. It tells us the boundaries

between “us” and “others,” it requires people to follow social orders and it encourages us to improve ourselves. That is the culture of lion dancing in my hometown. (Joseph Mo 2013)

Lion dancing is a form of storytelling because all the movements are based on the story of a lion’s daily life. Daniel Wong says:

From the beginning of the dance to the end, every movement has its own meaning. The whole dance tells the story of a lion on a regular day of its life. At first, the lion in the story wakes up but it does not just jump up. Just like our human beings, it opens its eyes slowly, yawns, rubs its eyes and touches hairs and its ears. We call this ‘Waking up the lion from the ground (平地起狮).’ Players have to imitate all these detailed body movements which are the best part to watch in lion dancing. After the lion gets up, it starts to get ready to go out of its cave for food. But it is always cautious, so it checks if any traps or other kinds of dangers around its cave. When it feels safe, it begins to seek for food. On its way, it might pass bridges or go through some other challenging places so it has to figure out how to overcome those difficulties. When it sees food, again, it has to find out if there are any traps or dangers so it checks carefully to make sure that everything is okay. Then it would start to eat its food. When it finishes, it might burp and touch its belly. Then, it might feel tired and go back to sleep again. In some cases, there is a teaser or Buddha involved in the dance. The story is that the food is owned by a person [mostly a Buddha] but is stolen by the lion. Therefore, the Buddha has to chase the lion to get his food back. When he finds that the food has been eaten up by the lion, he sets various difficult tasks to revenge. As you can see, the whole dance is a terrific story, so you have to know the story to interpret the dance and evaluate the performance. (Daniel Wong 2013)

During the dance, movements are all guided by the music, which is provided by three percussion instruments: a drum, cymbals and gongs. In addition to its primary role to guide the movements of players through rhythmic melodies and changes of meters and pitches, the second, but not less important role of music, is to create the performance space of a particular lion dancing group. Daniel Wong says, “If you want to play lion dance well, you have to understand drumming, which is thought to be the spirit of the dance” (Daniel Wong 2013). In my interview with Wong, when he was explaining how to use the beats, he stood up and used his desk as a mock drum to explain:

Unlike western drumming where a whole set of drums are involved to make musical variation, there is only one drum in the lion dance. Therefore all parts of the drum - the

drumhead, the edges of the drum and even the drumsticks - are used to make melodic and tonal changes. We have some basic beats in lion dancing. They are three star beat, five star beat and seven star beat²⁸... The three star beat is basically two beats, but the first beat is divided evenly into two shorter beats. Five star beat is three beats but first two beats are divided evenly into four shorter beats and seven star beat is four beats but the first three beats are all divided evenly into six shorter beats (Daniel Wong 2013).

Wong continues:

To match these beats, there are three basic steps called three-star step, five-star step and seven-star step. The three-star steps are used when the lion is checking stuff, waking up and doing things around the original spot it stands. The seven-star steps are used when the lion is doing long walk. The five-star-steps are the most commonly used in lion dancing and they are used in all other occasions. Of course, there are more variations other than these three steps, but all other steps are based on these three basics. The usage of different steps is traditionally set. (Daniel Wong 2013)

Furthermore, Daniel Wong says, “If you don’t know all these basics, you can’t do the lion dance and you can’t understand it” (Daniel Wong 2013).

Therefore, I would suggest that, the Cantonese lion dance belongs to a subcategory of “cultural performance,” (Singer 1959) the folk drama that Thomas A. Green characterizes as “a scripted performance which incorporates mimesis and role-distribution among two or more players and which adheres to the tradition aesthetic and communicative models of the performing community” (Green 1981, 428). Anne C. Burson defines folk drama similarly; she highlights the significance of a traditional text and style: “A folk drama is a mimetic performance whose text and style of presentation are based on traditional models; it is presented by members of a group to other members of the same reference group. A specific inherited text is not the determining factor that makes an event folk drama; rather, it is the traditional pattern on which the event is based” (Burson 1980, 316). Although Burson constantly reminds us that “folk drama is not a survivalistic phenomenon, but a vital, meaningful, and very contemporary part of the life of many groups,” (Burson 1980, 310) she and Green focus on cultural meanings carried

²⁸ The word “star” is “used to illustrate the beats caused by the touch of the drum sticks to the big drum” (Liu 1981, 63).

in earlier forms of folk drama. Burson continues: “Folk drama is seen as an activity which has its roots in the usually distant, rural past, and which often seems somewhat out of place in a contemporary cultural context. In addition, folk productions are considered to have basically fixed texts which were handed down unchanged from year to year and generation to generation” (Burson 1980, 305).

To improve the dancing techniques of dancers and enhance their understanding of the culture, in February 1984, Daniel Wong drew on his personal connection and invited Luk Gan Wing (陆镜荣) the third generation direct disciple of Wong Fei Hung, a famous Lion dancing and kung fu grand master who lived in Toronto to come to Newfoundland to train members of the local lion dancing group (see Figure 53). According to Daniel Wong, there were 30 to 40 people attending the series of workshops and a majority of them were restaurant workers who were from Canton or Cantonese-speaking areas like Hong Kong or Macau. In this 2-week workshop, as Daniel Wong says, “He [Luk] taught everything about lion dance starting from basic martial arts drills to basic lion dance steps and the meaning of each step. He also tried to explain the culture of lion dancing as much as possible in this series of intensive workshops. He trained different people in different roles based on their talents. Some people were trained in drumming and some others were learning how to dance” (Daniel Wong 2013). Many participants notice the substantial improvement of their skills after these intensive workshops. Chan Chau Tam says, “Luk was a terrific teacher and a lot of misunderstandings on lion dance in my mind were completely corrected. I was learning drumming with him. In Hong Kong, I had a lot of opportunities to listen to the beats but couldn’t understand. He explained to me and taught me the real drumming techniques” (Chan Chau Tam 2012). Wong comments, “He taught us the right way of performing traditional Chinese lion dance. After the workshops, our performance was

much better than earlier. We could do the whole set of the dance including waking up the lion, lion's jumps, walking through bridges, eating greens 采青 and stacking at the height of three times as tall as a person. We can play more than an hour without any breaks.” (Daniel Wong 2013)



Figure 53: The Group Photo of Sifu Luk's Workshop in 1984 (From top to bottom: first row – Simon Chiu, Chan Chau Tam (on the top –Joe Tam), Chen Kui, Rennies So, Jimmy Au, Son of Ted Hong, Jim Mah and Ted Hong; second row- unknown kids (4), Lan, Chung Lem, Daniel Wong, Sifu Luk, Paul Ho, David Chiu, Wing Hui Hong, unknown, Teresa Wong; third row- Johnney Chiu; bottom row: unknown kids (5)). Courtesy of Chan Chau Tam.

“The right way” in Wong’s words refers to the way that people who affiliate to Wong Fei Hung’s Kung Fu School in Cantonese-speaking area of China learn and perform lion dance, which has been transmitted for generations without major changes. However, Wong’s school is only one of many kung fu styles in southern China. Slovenz[-Low] reports that, in New York’s Chinatown, dancers in New York City affiliated to over 30 kung-fu schools (Slovenz[-Low] 1987, 77). The visit of *Sifu* Luk was crucial to the Chinese lion dancing group in Newfoundland,

which therefore was able to claim their lineage in the lion dancing tradition. In that tradition, the reputation and actual skill of a *sifu* is considerably important to a dance group. Generally speaking, there is no lion dancing group without a *sifu*. Billy Hong comments, “at the beginning, there was no real lion dance in Newfoundland because they didn’t even have a *sifu* to organize and teach” (Billy Hong 2013). Lineage “is important in martial arts, where every performance refers back to one’s teacher” (Slovenz[Low] 1994, xi). While in Newfoundland, this martial arts tradition is not strictly carried on and the absence of this conservative restriction encourages any individual interested in the lion dance to practice and perform, in other places, people’s affiliations often determine if they are allowed to perform lion dance.

Many people reconnected to their Chinese culture and tradition –the Cantonese version, and some of them refreshed their earlier memories of the old world’s heritage by attending *Sifu* Luk’s workshop. Because of the workshop, lion dancing, as a living tradition returned to their community, Daniel Wong says, “I was born to the culture of lion dance and I was so happy to see that the association brought *Sifu* Luk to Newfoundland. He was the one who made me feel that I had never left the culture” (Daniel Wong 2013). More importantly, *Sifu* Luk’s workshop attempted to recover every performative detail and re-create the lost culture behind the performance including the tradition of kung fu linkage; as a result, it allowed Chinese lion dance in Newfoundland to regain some of its “historical authenticity.” The quest of “historical authenticity,” which is thought to be substantial to various kinds of performances, echoes the debate in the Early Music Revival movement, in which performers are encouraged to restore the original performances of masters like Bach, Beethoven and others in specific periods on period instruments (instruments corresponding to the periods that those pieces of music were played) (see Haskell 1988 and Kenyon 1988). Likewise, Luk’s workshop also attempted to lead the lion

dancing in Newfoundland return to the original Wong Fei Hung's style. Daniel Wong, as many other lion dancers trained in the workshop at his time, reminds us that, "If you want to perform, you have to perform it correctly" (Daniel Wong 2013).

Many community dancers consider professional training from experienced dancers to be important because it immediately improves the dancers' skills. As well, skills learned in the workshops enable participants "to train our younger members to keep this art form alive" (Daniel Wong 2013). Daniel Wong observes that after Luk's workshop, the period from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, was the peak time of lion dancing in Newfoundland. He says, "At that time, all people [Cantonese-speaking individuals] wanted to participate into lion dancing, especially those people who were working in Chinese restaurants. Many of them were in their 30s or early 40s. It was quite easy to get 30 to 40 people to do regular practice." In addition to those names mentioned earlier, regular lion dancers also included "Sing Lang Au, Anthony Tam, Wing Yuen Au, Jim Lam, Wing Hui Hong, Rennies So and many others" (Kim Hong 2011). The visit of *Sifu* Luk has become a solid memory shaped by the local lion dancing team. Peter Wong recalls, "The one in the 1980s was the major one of the lion dance training in St. John's. At that time, Jim Mah, Daniel Wong and Rennies So were all involved into the workshop which was offered by a *Sifu* Luk from Toronto. They performed with two other lions which were very heavy" (Peter Wong 2011).

In late 1990s and early 2000s, some dancers moved out of St John's to smaller communities to open businesses or to bigger metropolitan areas after their retirement. Tzu-Hao Hsu observes, "The lion dance troupe has always been with the association since its inception, and over the years, they were performed by different generations but many of them have moved away" (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). For example, Chung Lem relocated to Harbour Grace, Sing Lang Au and Wing

Yuen Au moved to Toronto, and Jim Mah left for Ottawa. In addition to relocation, many active lion dancers such as David Chiu and Rennie So who were getting into their 50s were reluctant to take part in the actual performance.

These changes called for a new generation of lion dancers to take over the tradition and keep it going. Peter Wong recalls, “Before us, there were also twin sisters Ni Chu-Chen and Ling Chu-Chen and their brother Ping performing lion dance and they were taught by Jim Mah. They carried on performing through 8 or 10 years. They are all gone now. After their graduation from here, they all left for Toronto” (Peter Wong 2011). The current leader of the CANL lion dancing team Justin So was also trained by Jim Mah. So comments, “They took a bunch of kids. They just taught them to do some small performance. I did a few over the year. Uncle Jim, Jim Mah was the one who used to teach people. We just did what he taught us to do.” (Justin So 2014).

Without professional lion dancing masters, the training of the younger dancers was slow and limited. Daniel Wong comments, “They lost almost half of the tradition, I mean, skills and knowledge of the culture that we learned from *Sifu* Luk” (Daniel Wong 2013). Similarly, Kim Hong says, “Those people who were playing for us in the 70s and 80s had taught what they knew to those younger ones but that was not as good as those professionals. It was the time to bring some instructors from the outside to teach those younger fellows who were born here, or who were born in China but raised here” (Kim Hong 2011).

Personal Authenticity: New Generation Lion Dancers

Upon the request, with funding from Canadian Heritage to celebrate the Canadian Government’s apology to Chinese head tax and the 30th anniversary of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, artist and martial arts master Lat Yip, a Cantonese-speaking

Vietnamese Chinese, was invited by Betty Wong (the CANL president from 2005-2008) to Newfoundland from Toronto in 2006. For the workshop, Betty Wong says, “I bought two lions and a small drum” (Betty Wong 2010). These two lions are the current lions used in various functions and events in recent years. One of them is flaming red and the other is golden yellow (see Figure 54). Different from the older lions owned by the association, “these two lions have tails and pants which come with the lions’ heads, match the patterns of the other parts of the costumes in the same fabric and design to symbolize lions’ legs. They look nicer than the older ones” (Daniel Wong 2013). However, “in traditional Cantonese lion dancing, the players’ pants were either plain martial arts pants or gym pants” (Daniel Wong 2013).



Figure 54: Lions at the 2008 CANL Family Fun Day, Gower Street United Church, St. John's. Courtesy of Alick Tsui.

Sifu Lat Yip’s workshop “was a one-week workshop and two hours per day at the lecture hall of the Gower Street United Church. Around 9 people attended the workshop (see Figure 55). He tried to train us but he also said it was short of time. He showed us how to move the lion and

do the jumps” (Peter Wong 2011). Justin So recalls, “the big part of the workshop was music.

Yip *Sifu* was really good at music” (Justin So 2014). Regarding the workshop, Tzu-Hao Hsu says,

Six years ago, my very decent friend Justin So with other two younger members of the association had the opportunity to be trained with a lion dance master that flew down from Toronto with his son to give us some basic training. I wasn’t able to attend the training camp, but we were able to exchange our knowledge afterwards in the later sessions. I was trained to play instruments and everybody learned some basic movements. And we figured that we can dance together and it was very interesting learning strength. (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012)



Figure 55: The Workshop of Lat Yip. Courtesy of Lat Yip.

After Lat Yip’s workshop the current lion dance group formed with fourteen regular dancers and some associates under the leadership of Justin So. Of those regular members, Peter Wong, Teresa Wong, Tzu-Hao Hsu and Cerith Wong are mature dancers. The team also includes university students such as Catherine Shek, Matthew So, Joshua Lau, Gabriel Lau, Emma Cole, Jerry Xie, Joshua Wong and Andrew Leung, and high school students like William Ping Jr.(see

Figure 56). The associate members include distance instructor Lat Yip, former performers like Jim Mah and Inga Liu-Lambert, photographers Alick Tsui and Violet Ryan-Ping, and some family members of the regulars such as Bill Ping.



Figure 56: Some Members of the CANL Lion Dance Troupe at 2011's CANL Family Fun Day, Gower Street United Church, St. John's (left to right: William Ping Jr., Matthew So, Teresa Wong, Justin So, Jerry Xie, Andrew Leung, Joshua Lau and Gabriel Lau).

Slightly different from the older generation lion dancers who were mostly first-generation Cantonese, members of this new lion dance team are from more diverse cultural backgrounds. A majority of them, such as Peter Wong, Teresa Wong, Joshua Lau, Gabriel Lau, Justin So, Matthew So, Joshua Wong and Catherine Shek, are still from Cantonese-speaking families. Among them, Joshua Wong was born and raised in Hong Kong; Catherine Shek is a third generation Chinese born in Calgary, Alberta. Some members have strong association with non-Cantonese Mainland China. Jerry Xie was born to a Chinese couple from Northern China and

Emma Cole was born in China but adopted by a Newfoundland Cole family. Some were born and raised in intermarriage families between individuals of Chinese descent and British Newfoundlanders, such as Andrew Leung, William Ping Jr. and Cerith Wong. In addition, Tzu-Hao Hsu was born in Mandarin/Taiwanese-speaking Taiwan but raised in Newfoundland. All the current members of this team are fully acculturated into local culture and who (except Joshua Wong) have had little exposure to the Cantonese version of Chinese culture even though many of them have Cantonese parents. They come together under a united identity “second/later generation Chinese in Newfoundland” and represent what Andriy Nahachewsky calls the “new ethnicity,” which he explains “refers to later generational persons and groups who consciously choose to claim this ethnicity and both privately and publicly incorporate ethnically defined cultural practices” (Nahachewsky 2002, 177). From time to time, people with “new ethnicity” confront difficulties as they try to balance loyalty to their ancestral heritage and to the mainstream cultural values. Therefore, because participants are drawn to the lion dance for diverse reasons, it may be misleading to emphasize the second or later generation Chinese dancers’ motivation to reconnect with their heritage. People in the lion dance group actually have different perceptions and visions of their involvement in the traditional dance.

Justin So has participated in the lion dance group for a long time and is a very self-motivated lion dancer. So says that he has been involved in lion dancing since he was eight-year-old (Justin So 2014). He takes on much of the responsibility for locating educational materials from various available sources, encouraging members to share their own information and experience in order to improve their dancing skills and to organize all regular practices and pre-event rehearsals. So Says, “I feel responsible to educate other people about my culture” (Justin So 2014). On February 21, 2012, he created a Facebook group named “CANL Lion Dance” to facilitate

communication among members. Peter Wong comments, “Justin reads tons of materials related to lion dance and goes to YouTube to watch videos all the time” (Peter Wong 2011). Justin So attempts to share his knowledge of lion dancing with other members in the group. For example, Peter Wong says, “The only stuff outside of the dancing skills was heard about, which we were told by Justin, like how the dance came from, say, the lion waking up, why it likes lettuces and why it is good luck. All are about the symbolic meanings of lion dance and its movements” (Peter Wong 2011). William Ping Jr. says, “I heard a story of the origin of the Chinese lion dance from Justin. He said, back to the past in China, there was a dragon that attacked a Chinese village, so that people dressed up as a lion to scare the dragon off. That is why they do the lion dance” (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011).

In the current lion dancing troupe of Newfoundland, dancers other than Justin So do not usually attempt to research aspects of either the lion dance performance or its history. Jerry Xie, whose parents had no cultural attachment to Cantonese lion dance before their immigration, commented that “I joined the lion dance when I was younger because I thought it was going to be really fun (which it still is) and because of how amazing a lion dance looked” (Jerry Xie 2012). A secondary consideration was “the history behind it” (Jerry Xie 2012). Like Xie, most members do not share So’s deep commitment to exploring the lion dance’s historical and cultural meanings. Peter Wong was recruited by the Executive Board of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador to the lion dancing team because of the low enrolment of Lat Yip’s workshop in 2006. Wong recalls, “People in the association invited a *sifu* to come over from Toronto. The *sifu* and his son came over but they didn’t get enough people to go to, so they phoned everyone and asked, ‘Can you come down? We need more people.’ I said, ‘I am busy, but okay, I am coming down.’ That was how some of us got involved. Before that, I just

watched” (Peter Wong 2011). Because of his lesser interest in the cultural part of lion dance, Peter Wong says, “I don’t really search for background information about the culture of lion dance. I am one of the type that I read technical books and manuals, but those fictions don’t really interest me. I am not really motivated to read those cultural things. They are low on the list” (Peter Wong 2011).

William Ping Jr. joined the team because he was invited by some members in the lion dancing group and encouraged by his parents to maintain at least some aspects of his Chinese heritage (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011). Ping says:

I was not actually interested in the lion dance until I really saw it. The first time I saw the lion dance was at the Rooms²⁹ and that was an international show. At that time, I was taking the drum lessons so I was looking at the drums. Peter Wong said to me, “Will, you are a drummer. Why don’t you come to our practice at the Gower Street United Church?” That was how I started. (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011)

Partially because of the lesser interest of members in the cultural part of lion dancing, the improvement of skills is often the main, if not the only, focus of the members in their occasional practice or pre-performance rehearsals. Joshua Lau says, “When we practice we don’t usually talk about the culture unless someone asks. It’s more about different routines for different occasions. That’s about it” (Joshua Lau 2012). Peter Wong recalls that, “When we are practicing or trying new techniques, if we have difficulty to do it or we are confused how to do it. Justin might talk a little bit about the story behind the movements and the explanation often makes the complicated stuff easier” (Peter Wong 2011). In many cases, the understanding of culture in lion dance performing is more optional than required because, like other activities, the lion dance is only a recreational hobby. Justin So admits, “I don’t know if the role of culture and history of the lion dance is important in training. Actually everybody can pick it up. If you don’t know the culture, you can still play it. The role of culture is not critical” (Justin So 2014).

²⁹ The Rooms is the provincial museum and archives of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Practice and rehearsal time is often too tight for the experienced members to introduce the cultural aspects of lion dance to others. Violet Ryan-Ping comments, “These guys are doing really basic steps. They don’t really have too much practice. If they have a performance in the next week, they would get together this Friday and go over the routine again. They don’t really have time because many of them are working full-time. If they have time, they will concentrate on how to improve. They don’t care about culture in that case” (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011). In this sense, on the one hand, when performing the lion dance, “the youth and the group” are given “a sense of cultural identity that this is something unique to the Chinese culture and this is part of who they are” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). As Joshua Lau says, “You would learn a little bit about your culture. I mean I suppose it’s part of my roots because I grew up Chinese” (Joshua Lau 2012). On the other hand, they may also experience a lack of knowledge of their own ancestral culture, which they, especially those Cantonese descendants, are told is part of them.

Because the lion dance is still foreign and exotic to many dancers who have little exposure in Cantonese culture, some strategies are commonly used in the learning process, which is different from the traditional way of training that is based on the understanding of the culture. In some cases, in order to simplify the drumming for the lion dance, beating is traditionally and elaborately, rather than arbitrarily divided, into smaller units. These beats are standardized and labeled by different names. For example, in a lion dance performance for the University’s Alumni reunion and the Chinese Head Tax Exhibition in 2012 (see Figure 57), the drumming beats were broken down into a sequence of the following components by Justin So:

Beat
No drumming
Sleeping/snoring Beat (0:00-0:15)
Bowing drum beats (x3) (0:15-0:41)

Hai Ci drum beats (0:41-0:56)
Bowing drum beats (x3) (0:56-1:19)
Walking beats (1:19-1:49)
Waiting beat (1:49-2:05)
Side jump beat (x3) (2:05-2:10)
Leading beat and ending beat (2:10-2:13)
Walking beat and bowing beat (2:13-3:47)
High drum to walking beat (3:47-4:05)
Hai Ci drum beat (4:06- 4:22)
Bowing drum beats (x3) (4:23-4:50)
High drum and ending beat (4:50-5:00)

Table 2: Beats of Lion Dancing for the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's.



Figure 57: Lion Dancing at the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's. Courtesy of Violet Ryan-Ping (left to right: top row-William Ping Jr. Mary Gin and Justin So; bottom row – Emma Cole, Tzu-Hao Hsu and Jerry Xie).

Breaking down beats reduces the chance of making mistakes in a live performance, but there are also drawbacks. The music no longer needs to flow as an artistic entity and changes of rhythmic beats and smooth transitions between different chapters of music sometimes become unexpected pauses during playing. From time to time, the pauses transform the melodic stream into a

mechanical combination of discrete musical segments. Music, in this sense, is directed by movements rather than leading the latter. The musical performance in the lion dance is thus transformed from an emotional expression to performative techniques for the sake of movements only. That said, these techniques make music skills easier to learn and transmit across generations.

Corresponding to the standardized musical playing, the movements of lion dancing are also choreographed. In the same instruction document for the performance on August 11, 2012, Justin So also broke the flow of movements into several actions as shown below:

Figure
Introduction
- Bow, get into lion.
Sleeping Lion, waking up
- Scratch ear, eye,
- Third time get up and lick leg
Hai Ci with jump
Three bows
Walk around in a circle. End in center.
Look left, look right, look center
- Look down and up in direction
- Use eyes, ears, mouth
Raise head and step to side with toe flick
Leg lick, turn and sit
Walk and greetings (x3)
- Rub
- Lick
- Eyes and ears
Back to centre. Cross and face crowd
Hai Ci with pose
Three Bows
Ending

Table 3: Figures of Lion Dancing for the 2012 Performance at Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's

Because they are less bound to the lion dance tradition which prioritizes cultural meanings, this new generation of lion dancers has more freedom to create their own new tradition, which is different from the Cantonese performance. For example, Peter Wong comments:

For the weddings, we made up routines. The steps were basically the same, but we added some stuff on the routine, or say, traditional lion dance. I remembered for the first wedding at the Golf club of Pippy Place, we played with a red ball which symbolized the Chinese tradition. Also, there is no gender for the lions when we do the dance in appearance. So for Mary Gin's wedding, we made the red one to be female and the yellow one to be male. We used different actions and movements to indicate the genders. Say, when we made the routine, we made the red one more submissive, more feminine than the yellow one [see Figure 58]. We didn't learn from anybody but we just figured out. (Peter Wong 2011)



Figure 58: Lion Dancing at Mary Gin's Wedding, St. John's. Courtesy of Alick Tsui.

Nowadays, various online resources provide rich information of various aspects of lion dancing. Tzu-Hao Hsu says, "When you get the basics, you can be more creative. YouTube is an excellent teacher. It is a good visual reference material. A lot of the time, we are doing our own research on YouTube or other website and try to incorporate elements into our practice and training." As one of the productive consequences, at the 2013 Chinese New Year Gala on Memorial University's campus, Jerry Xie creatively combined the traditional Chinese lion dance with a popular pop song "Gangnam Style." Xie says, "We sort of had it planned it for a while

and we were happy to make it happen, although all it was the lion doing some basic movements while I did the main stuff” (Jerry Xie 2013). Perhaps Xie’s northern Chinese background allows him to freely present his idea of lion dancing.

The new generation of Chinese lion dancers differs from earlier Cantonese dancers who strictly observed the lion dancing traditions as they learned in Chinese centers-Canton and Hong Kong, in terms of how they performed and how they perceived their performance and the associated tradition and culture. It seems that the pursuit of historical authenticity is not seen as important for contemporary dancers as it was for their predecessors. These performers do not consider locally performed lion dancing as a cultural survival of the ancestral country; instead, through an interplay between “here” (Newfoundland) and “there” (China), the dance is now more interpreted in a vernacular way³⁰ so that the performance is distanced from the original traditional Chinese practice. William Ping Jr. reports:

What I am doing now [lion dancing] is a way to reconnect what my grandfather is about. Unlike Justin, Matthew and Peter, they are more authentic Chinese people than me so that the culture is a bigger deal to them. I don’t really know the history of Chinese lion dance and the cultural meanings and values of Chinese culture associated with the dance. What I am doing is a way to say “thank you” to my grandfather who gave me the blood and the heritage. (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011)

Self-identifying as a less authentic Chinese individual, William Ping Jr. has less attachment to the Cantonese roots of the lion dance and claims a more personal sentimental connection to the performance as a symbolic presentation of his ancestral heritage. Nevertheless, the performative/perceptive variation does not suggest that the performance of new generation of lion dancers is not authentic. The performance of lion dance in Newfoundland by the new

³⁰ However, according to Justin So, local adaption of lion dance can fit into a new tradition of lion dancing, which is more popular in overseas Chinese communities (Justin So 2014). As he says, “It is not our invention. There are some other troupes having been doing that. They take modern songs instead of traditional ones. It is a newer tradition and newer style.” (Justin So 2014)

ethnicity like Ping may not fit into the category of “historical authenticity” but falls into the rubric of “personal authenticity,” which, as Peter Kivy puts it:

When we say of a ... performance that is “authentic” in the sense of being “personally authentic,” we are praising it for bearing the special stamp of personality that marks it out from all others...we are making it out as a unique product of a unique individual, something with an individual style of its own – “an original.” Because performances are works of art, we can praise them for two qualities that they (but not only they) are particularly valued for having the qualities of personal style and originality. (Kivy 1995, 123)

The idea of a cultural performance being personally authentic echoes Lionel Trilling’s earlier work in 1971. In *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Trilling encourages performers to convey or present their inner nature (sincerity) to others, instead of solely imitating earlier models or styles. In the case of Chinese lion dance in Newfoundland, the new generation of locally-born or -raised lion dancers, managing a new definition of their ethnicity, are less motivated to pursue historical authenticity as a goal for the dance, but are more interested in incorporating their personal understandings of being Chinese descendants of various cultural and regional background into their performances in ways that highlight social and cultural changes in the local society. To some degree, the performance of the new generation representing a new and united Chinese identity within their group members with diverse cultural backgrounds challenges the older Cantonese version of Chineseness which was established in the performance of the first generation Cantonese dancers.

Lion Dancing Audience

Since its inception in Newfoundland, lion dancing, although a Cantonese tradition, has been long associated with the Chinese presence at special cultural contexts. Especially at the CANL functions such as Chinese New Year celebrations and sometimes annual flower services, the lion dance is usually included as a cultural representation of the pan-Chinese identity. Lili Wang

explains, “We have the lion dance almost every year in our New Year’s celebrations because people, especially those local [non-Chinese] Newfoundlanders, think that is very traditional and very Chinese. They would recognize lion dance as Chinese immediately when they see it” (Lili Wang 2012). In the same vein, Tzu-Hao Hsu also says, “I would argue that lion dance, if performed properly, is probably the symbol for any Chinese anywhere. Just because, again, it is unique Chinese tradition. If you are Korean, Japanese or any other types of Asian, you have your own way to celebrate it. Lion dance is pretty much part of our New Year and part of groundbreaking major events” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). Lion dancing in Newfoundland is what Tom Pettitt calls “customary drama,” which is conceptualized as “performances closely related to customs” (Pettitt 1995, 27).

In consideration of the communicative function of performance, Pettitt argues that performance of a customary drama “is not under the auspices of a single social group but part of a deliberate, articulated encounter between two distinct and identifiable groups,” which are, for analytical purpose, an active group whose motive is to initiate the encounter and bring the performance to the other group which is labelled as the reactive group (Pettitt 1995, 31-32). The active group is also recognized as social “visitors” as representatives of a community or a sub-community because of their role to bring the performance to the reactive group, which therefore transforms to be the “host.” Pettitt lists four main motivations of the active group: exaction, interaction, demonstration (“reflecting a relationship... with the host, or an attitude... towards them”) and intervention (Pettitt 1995, 34). However, the communication in any encounter is not a one-way interaction and the fulfillment of the expectation of the active group is not self-determined but also depends on “the response of the reactive” in the encounters (Pettitt 1995, 33-34).

The communication happens in what Richard Schechner calls “whole performance process.” Due to the limitation of Schechner’s theory which is performance-centered, I propose a new frame that also considers audience. Based on van Gennep’s rites of passage, this new framework defines a performance as a process, which I term performative rite of passage process. It consists of three successive parts: pre-performance (pre-liminal), performance (liminal) and post performance (post-liminal).

In the pre-performance period, performers engage in training and rehearsing (training, workshop and rehearsal in Schechner’s process), while the audience is exposed to advertisements and told about the programs and the availability of tickets for the events. They may be invited by the host to attend the event. In period of the performance, while audience members are checking-in and socializing with each other at the reception, performers are using the last minutes to review movements and warm up their bodies (warm-up in Schechner’s). When the event begins and all audience are seated and watching, the performers are doing performance (the show). During the performance, instead of staying on the stage, lions would travel around in the audience. For example, at the Royal Canadian Legion where the CANL Chinese New Year’s parties are often located, spaces between tables create some small lanes allowing the lions to walk down from the stage and penetrate into the seating area. When lions pass through the audience, people may touch the bodies of lions and some might also tap the moving pompon-like tail. Hence, the traveling of lions transforms a distanced, exotic and abstract cultural performance to an immediate, familiar and tangible personal physical experience. At the same time, performers might receive some feedback from the audiences by making “noise” or the like.

After the stage show, performers would change their costumes to common clothes (cool down). When they return to the “theatre” as a part of audience, they begin to socialise with other

audience members who would either praise or criticize the previous performance (aftermath). In many cases, when the entertainment ends, some audience members would talk to the lion dancers about the performance and more broadly, the Chinese culture and tradition. During the conversation, many non-Chinese individuals find that, as second or later generation Chinese, most of the dancers consciously or unconsciously attempt to distance themselves from their ancestral country and the dance and prefer to be treated as performers of a dance, which happens to be associated with their roots. In other words, the dancing activities are more meaningful to many dancers than the cultural meanings, which are traditionally the core of the performance and the whole celebratory event. Different from the performers, the audience at large especially those who are newly exposed to the Chinese atmosphere and small children show more interest to understand the ethnic symbol and heritage. As usual, during the intermission between the formal entertainment and the ball dance, for the convenience of the visitors who intend to know more about the dance, the lion costumes are exhibited in the middle of the stage. The lion dance is more welcome in the Family Fun Day which is a part of the Chinese New Year celebration featuring the participation of children on the following day is also organized by CANL.

The annual Family Fun Day is usually located in the lecture hall of the Gower Street United Church on the Sunday afternoon, the day after the New Year dinner and dance. Most of the time, lion dancing is presented as the only performance which is followed by various reciprocal games. When the performers leave the costumes on the stage after the performance, many children rush to the spot of the exhibition in order to get a good position for taking pictures. In addition to the individual interaction with the lions, at the end of the event, all children are asked to get together for a group photo and the lions are placed in the center of the group. According to many children and their parents after their attendance to the Family Fun Day, the lions are not only treated as

plush toys such as teddy bears, but also a symbol of their heritage which, for many children, especially those adopted Chinese children by non-Chinese Newfoundlanders, is often inaccessible (Violet Ryan-Ping and William Ping Jr. 2011).

Structure	Performers	Audience
Pre-performance	Training	Advertisements are posted;
	Workshop	Invitations are send to guests;
	Rehearsal	Tickets are available.
Performance	Warm-up	Checking-in, socializing;
	The Show Itself	Watching and sometimes responding and giving feedback;
Post-Performance	Cool Down (changing clothes)	Watching other performances, or continuing to socialize;
	Aftermath	Direct or indirect comments on the performance.

Table 4: The New Pattern of the Whole Performance Process.

Audience members of the lion dance in Newfoundland, especially non-Chinese Newfoundlanders, actively support the performance. When lion dancing was absent for some years in early 2000s, the Chinese Association was highly encouraged by the general public to resume this traditional activity. Alick Tsui recalls, “It had been two or three years that nobody performed lion dance and many people, especially local Newfoundlanders asked us why we stopped doing that. They told us that they wanted to watch lion dance. The association also felt if we didn’t have lion dance to show people, we would lose the embassy support to present our

culture. Then we started to plan to get it restarted” (Alick Tsui 2012). In addition to catering to the interests of the general public including individuals of Chinese descent and non-Chinese, lion dancing is also thought by some individuals of Chinese descent to be an effective way to educate people of Chinese descent about their Chinese cultural roots. Justin So says, “It is a way to get people interested in learning my Chinese culture. The demography is very different today. When I grew up, a lot of people were first generation. But now, there is a group of second or later generation, kids of intermarriage families and those adopted Chinese kids. It is a way that gets people interested” (Justin So 2014).

The interest of people is often sparked because, as Daniel Wong explains, “The lion dance is a kind of visual performance with noise and colour, which makes it more attractive than other Chinese performances such as singing and instruments” (Daniel Wong 2013). Daniel Wong’s explanation reflects Chiou-Ling Yeh’s findings in her study of Chinese New Year celebrations in San Francisco. From the perspective of non-Chinese attendees, Chiou-Ling Yeh characterizes three types of ethnic activities displayed at the Chinese New Year occasions, namely, “the first contained exotic and popular spectacles; the second was too ethnic to generate any interest; while the third was simply too foreign to be accepted” (Yeh 2008, 51). Yeh categorizes the dragon dance and the lion dance in the first group because they not only embodied ethnic sentiments, but also showcased multiculturalism; on one hand, they were symbols that Chinese immigrants could relate to as they embodied good fortune, on the other hand, they manifested a kind of American democratic practice that encouraged ethnic expression (Yeh 2008, 51-52). However, other forms of performance such as Chinese opera, folk dances, and martial arts are often preferred by Chinese immigrants and yet Yeh notes that “mainstream newspapers publicized these activities but never discussed them at length, possibly because they only catered to Chinese immigrants”

(Yeh 2008, 52). Non-Chinese audience members often express a lack of interest in esoteric expressions such as songs in Chinese languages and talk shows with many confusing cultural hints and puns. The general interest of the host society encourages event organizers “to emphasize the bicultural character (the combination of East and West) or exotic Chinese traditions” as part of their major goal to “generate political and economic resources” (Yeh 2008, 52). In Newfoundland, because of the small size of the Chinese community, performances other than the lion dance, such as Peking Opera and Cantonese Opera, have never been as popular as in other Canadian cities as discussed in some scholarly works (e.g. Cheung 2013, Li, P Stephen K 1987 and Sebryk 2012). Alick Tsui mentioned that, in 1990s, a restaurant owner in St. John’s was attempting to invite a Cantonese opera group from Toronto to Newfoundland for a family birthday party, but the plan was dropped due to the cost and small number of potential audience (Alick Tsui 2012).

Lion dancing is not only reserved for relatively private ethnic spaces, but also is a part of ethnic educational programs, multicultural gatherings and more community events. Kim Hong notes:

In addition to the garden party after Flower Service and our traditional Chinese New Year celebrations, the lion dance was also played in a few occasions like the opening of restaurants like the Jade Garden Restaurant [see Figure 59] and St. John’s Labour Day Parade, which we attended twice in late 1970s and early 1980s. ..We also did a few times for some schools like the Bishop College. There were some international week activities in those schools to show their students cultures of other countries. We wanted to show people in St. John’s a bit of Chinese culture. People did very much enjoy seeing it. (Kim Hong 2011)



Figure 59: Lion Dancing at the Opening of Jade Garden Restaurant, St. John's. Courtesy of May Soo.

Tzu-Hao Hsu also comments:

The lion dance is the ambassador for us. We typically reserve the lion dance for pretty much Chinese Association functions, but in the recent years, we perform for fundraisers, we have done it for weddings in the community, we also started to perform for educational events to promote cultural diversity, so we have been getting ourselves in a little bit more in diversity initiative [see Figure 60] and we hope to carry that through for the next number of years. (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012)



Figure 60: Lion Dancing at the Rooms for the Event "Sharing Our Culture" in 2012, St. John's. Courtesy of Violet Ryan-Ping (left to right: William Ping Jr., Jerry Xie, Catherine Shek, Justin So, Tzu-Hao Hsu and Gabriel Lau).

In 2013, the CANL lion dance troupe was invited to participate in the St. John's Christmas Parade (see Figure 61).



Figure 61: Lion Dancing at the 2013 St. John's Christmas Parade (Joshua Lau) (CBC NL).
http://live.cbc.ca/Event/t_Johns_Santa_parade_2013?Page=0

At the same time, while the lion dance is well accepted as a Chinese symbol in public circumstances to reflect collective Chinese ethnicity, some individuals of Chinese descent look at it differently. Generationally speaking, almost all first generation Chinese people recognize the Chinese cultural elements in the lion dance. However, some of them hesitate to accept the lion dance as a Chinese cultural marker in Newfoundland because they see the local version as lacking historical authenticity. Shinn Jia Hwang comments on the lion dance performed in the early days, “At the beginning, nobody knew how to play the lion dance because many early performers didn’t have any kung fu experience. What they could do was imitating some movements and randomly hitting the instruments. I once told them, ‘You guys can do whatever you want, but you got to know that what you are doing is not real Chinese lion dancing’” (Shinn Jia Hwang and Ching Hsiang Lin 2012). Likewise, Joseph Mo made a comment on the lion dance performance at Magic Wok’s Christmas party (see Figure 62):

I found that the lion dancing in Newfoundland was so different from what I had experienced in China. It was all changed and I think the reason for that is the lack of real culture of lion dancing. Without the culture, lion dancing here is just like a rootless tree. You can probably say that there is no good lion dancing or no traditional lion

dance in Newfoundland. To me, it looks like that people are playing a toy. (Joseph Mo 2013)



Figure 62: Lion Dancing at Magic Wok Eatery's 2010 Christmas Party at Delta Hotel, St. John's (Drummer- Kenny Wong).

New immigrants from the Northern part of China may consider the lion dance as a regional and archaic expression rather than a national and modern representation of Chinese culture. They refuse to accept this designated cultural expression as representation of their ethnicity. Lili Wang comments:

In Newfoundland, we have the lion dance every year, so in the minds of local people, it is an inseparable part of Chinese New Year. In my opinion, lion dancing itself represents the impression of older generation Chinese about Chinese New Year. In fact, in China, we had never seen the lion dance in Chinese New Year celebrations. I actually knew of lion dancing through reading books and watching movies. I think it is a very old thing which doesn't exist in China anymore. But here, it is a routine and without it, people might feel something missing in the celebrations. To me, lion dancing is performed similarly every year, but you can tell that every time when older people like Kim Hong see it, they are still very excited. They are so different from us because most of them, after they settled down in Newfoundland, have never gone back to China. Their memory about Chinese New Year stopped at the time when they left China, where the lion dance was an important part of the festive celebrations. Lion dancing provides an opportunity for them to reconnect to their home back in China. It is nostalgic. For people like me, we don't really have that kind of strong attachment to the lion dance. According to my experience, the celebration of Chinese New Year is more modern. Usually, people just visit each other, have a little break from work and have a dinner together. In my understanding of Chinese culture, there is no lion dance. (Lili Wang 2012)

A few people reject the lion dance as a symbol of their ethnicity due to negative personal associations. Katherine Huang says, “When I was in my grade 4, I lived in the property of the church where my father worked. The house was next to the main road of the city, so a lot of celebrations were held in the area. I often saw lion dancing performed there but I didn’t like it at all because the lion’s face looks scary to me” (Katherine Huang 2012). Peter Hing also says, “I am not interested in Chinese lion dance. It is foolish because it is repetitive all the time” (Peter Hing 2014). Daniel Wong comments, “If you like the lion dance, it is a part of your culture, but if you don’t like it, it is not. You decide” (Daniel Wong 2013).

In terms of second or later generation Chinese, memories and experiences of lion dancing at various cultural events have a strong impact on the conceptualization of their understanding of Chineseness. Without the lion dance, many of the younger generation of Chinese descent have limited interaction with Chinese traditions in their daily life. Justin’s father Peter So says, “It is the activities like lion dancing and other similar cultural events that link local born children to China and Chinese tradition. Without these connections, they would lose their cultural identity” (Peter So 2009). In this sense, lion dancing in Newfoundland is not only nostalgic but also educational. Many of them therefore ask for lion dancing to be included at important times to represent their identity. Chin Tan says, “In my son’s wedding in Toronto, at the high class hotel where the Queen of England stayed when she visited Canada, we brought in our culture, the lion dance. It was a lot of fun. We had the same thing for my daughter’s wedding” (Chin Tan 2012). When talking about Mary Gin’s weddings, Chan Chau Tam explains, “At Mary Gin’s first wedding party, there was no lion dancing but in the second one of hers, there was. That is because the first marriage was between her and a Chinese, but the second one was between her and a Caucasian guy” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

Without lion dancing as a cultural medium in those rite-of-passage events, especially at marriages, people may feel a loss of cultural identity in the public setting. One day in early September 2010, I dropped by Bill Ping's house to bring him some Chinese wedding paper-cuttings for his daughter's upcoming ceremony. Although he cannot speak any Chinese due to his mother's Irish roots, Bill Ping self-identifies as a second generation Chinese. He feels the deep cultural influences of his father, William Ping, and he constantly reminds his own children of their Chinese heritage. Therefore, a wedding featuring traditional Chinese cultural elements was planned for his daughter Candice. When Bill looked at the red decorations with Chinese characters and symbols, he was delighted: "It is so great and at least we have these." I immediately realized that there was some disappointment hidden under his excitement. When I asked what happened, he replied, "Oh, the lion dance team might not be able to show up at Candice's wedding. I have called them many times but they said they could not make it." I asked if having the lion dance really mattered and if he couldn't find some other entertainment but he responded, "Um, I don't think so. The lion dance is the only thing I can think of as real Chinese stuff in Newfoundland I guess." To Bill and his family, the lion dance made Chineseness visible. Without it at the wedding, his daughter's Chinese identity would not be well represented.

It is unclear how many Chinese people, especially those local-born or -raised individuals, respond to the bright colours and striking movements and noise of the lion dancing, and how many have any deeper kind of knowledge of the dance so that they are able to decipher the cultural symbolic codes embedded in the dance. In this sense, Kristin Valentine argues that "Intensive spectators do not pretend to understand the ceremony as they think a member of that culture might. Rather, spectators try to make sense of what they experience as audience members, being their comments on extensive background research and careful observation of the public

parts of the ceremonies. Knowing that ethical codes of conduct are not fixed, intense spectators necessarily live with ambiguity” (Valentine 2002, 281). Many people have a vague knowledge of the cultural meaning of the Cantonese lion dance. Kim Hong says, “I was told that the lion dance is supposed to bring good luck and chase away evils, but I don’t know why it has those functions. To me, it is a Chinese tradition and part of my culture, but more importantly, it is very nice entertainment. However, I couldn’t go any further to explain the tradition and culture” (Kim Hong 2011). Second generation Chinese May Soo says that the lion dance created a “more vivid and solid sense of Chineseness than chicken balls and chop suey,” but “I don’t really know anything about it. My parents and grandparents just told me that it was a Chinese tradition but never explained its meanings to me and of course, I never asked. All I know is that the lion dance means luck and prosperity” (May Soo 2013). Similarly, Francis Tam also says, “I have seen Chinese lion dances in both Newfoundland and China (in late 1990s). But I don’t recall any stories and history of lion dance in my memory. I can recognize it as a Chinese symbol but I don’t really know the cultural meaning behind the dance” (Francis Tam 2013). Many Chinese Newfoundlanders, if they are not culturally educated, are not able to interpret the traditional meanings of a performance like lion dancing. This does not diminish the enjoyment lion dancing can bring to audience members of all cultural backgrounds and ages and levels of Chinese cultural literacy but these comments suggest that deep historical and cultural meanings are not accessible to all present.

To fill any gap in audience members’ knowledge, a cultural interpreter is sometimes present to translate underlying cultural messages to the audience. The cultural interpretations reveal one of the key functions of theater, which, as William Morgan and Per Brask points out, “is not merely a means of entertainment but also one of instruction” (Morgan and Brask 1988, 178).

Daniel Wong recalls, “In the early days, we had MCs or interpreters to introduce the basics of lion dancing to audience and guide them how to watch it” (Daniel Wong 2013). For example, the organizer for the 1984 Chinese New Year Celebration of the CANL, Peter Hing, explained both the origins of that specific lion costume and the symbolic meanings of lion dancing (Peter Hing 2014). At present, Daniel Wong continues, “As we can see, the performance is shorter and nobody comes out to tell people the culture of the lion dance. It is because a lot of people, even dancers have limited knowledge about the tradition” (Daniel Wong 2013).

Current Situation

In recent years (2011-2013), the demography of the local lion dancing troupe has substantially changed and the population of regular participants has dramatically decreased. In 2011, Inga Liu and her husband moved to Ottawa because of job opportunities. Matthew So in 2012 and Jerry Xie in 2013 started to pursue their further training and education in the province of Quebec. Cerith Wong and Joshua Lau now rarely get involved in lion dancing practice because of working and studying schedules. Peter Wong is also unable to spare time for dance training due to family reasons. Thus, half the members of the lion dance team have difficulties attending regular practice (if any) and performances. The situation indicates that without new members, it will be unfeasible to maintain more advanced performances involving two lions. Tzu-Hao Hsu says, “We have two lions and three instruments, so you are looking at 7-8 people per performance. In the troupe itself, the number varies depending on who is available at what time, so typically, between 13-14 people” (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012). In early 2013, with the support of the Newfoundland and Labrador Headtax Redress Organization Inc., a new shining silver-

colored lion was purchased and now (see Figure 63), the three lion puppets in total require more participants.



Figure 63: CANL's Silver Lion. Courtesy of Violet Ryan-Ping.

Recruiting new dancers is always a challenge. Since early 2000s, after the peak time of lion dancing, low enrollment has been a major problem hindering the transmission and development of local lion dancing. Alick Tsui says, “It was very difficult to get people involved into doing the lion dance until the So family took over the leadership” (Alick Tsui 2012). Arthur Leung also says, “A lot of more experienced people left the province and we now had to use tape music to keep the tradition going. But more severely, kids and some of the parents are not interested in performing lion dance” (Arthur Leung 2004).

The situation is even worse. Peter Wong says, “The tradition is passed to who wants to do it, but not many people want to do it. We did ask around. We tried to get more young kids to practice and we sent out emails, but didn’t get back any responses” (Peter Wong 2011). The unsuccessful recruitment can be attributed to a variety of reasons. Wong continues, “Some people might feel embarrassed to do the dancing in front of the public, some people might not have time, or some people just don’t want to do it” (Peter Wong 2011). Another possible reason

of the failure is the relatively strict age and gender requirements of the traditional lion dancing.

Tzu-Hao Hsu says:

We do have a little difficulty to recruit more people because we are short of kids around in the ideal age we want them to start. For the large lions, we like the age between 13 to 15, and for the younger one, we like children around 7 or 8. At the moment, in the association's list, we are short of kids in that population. Or they are not particularly interested in lion dancing. And of course, traditionally the lion dance is more associated with boys, so a lot of girls are not quite interested in that, but we are happy to see some exceptions, so hopefully we get some new faces. (Tzu-Hao Hsu 2012)

However, these reasons are considered to be secondary factors resulting in a low enrolment of the Chinese lion dance in Newfoundland. I would suggest that the difficulty in recruiting new lion dancers first reflects the demographic change of the current Chinese community in Newfoundland. As mentioned in Chapter Two, nowadays, many newcomers come to Newfoundland as professional or students who are mostly from non-Cantonese Mainland China. They do not share the same cultural knowledge as older waves of Cantonese Chinese immigrants. Secondly, as Daniel Wong reflects, local born Chinese present a distinct, modern and vernacular identity of being Chinese, which is no longer defined by the lion dance:

Yes, today, a lot of kids are involved in so many activities. They might go to different classes like gymnastics, music, swimming and Taekwondo and they might play hockey, soccer or other sports. How come they couldn't spare some time to learn their own culture? The reason is that they feel no affiliation to the Chinese culture that is represented by the lion dance. They might want to claim other cultural identities but definitely not Chinese in this case, at least not the "Chinese" I would define. (Daniel Wong 2013)

Some older generation Chinese fear the death of traditional lion dancing in Newfoundland. For example, Kim Hong says, "The tradition is dying but we can't do anything to save it. This is one of the problems in this kind of small communities that we are living in" (Kim Hong 2011). However, people like Daniel Wong are more positive about the changes of the tradition. Daniel Wong says,

The tradition is always there and I know that a lot of younger people here are interested in doing the lion dance as well as some more experienced people who came to Newfoundland in recent years, but they are not currently involved in local performance. My point is, if people are still debating the issue whether the lion dance can or cannot represent Chinese culture, or other similar cultural concerns, the lion dance won't disappear because it is a platform for people to discuss and negotiate their identities unless people get a new venue to do the same or better job than the lion dance. Then they might eventually replace lion dancing. (Daniel Wong 2013)

I agree with Daniel Wong that an effective functional tradition will not disappear if it is still used to achieve efficient communication to exchange information and ideas, however, it can be replaced when a better channel is available and recognized. The current situation of the Chinese lion dance troupe in Newfoundland indicates that many second- and later-generation individuals of Chinese descent show less interest in connecting to themselves to the Cantonese version of Chinese culture through performing the lion dance. As members of the “new ethnicity,” they are free to choose whether and how to present their Chinese heritage.

Further Discussion

At the same time that people worry about the loss of tradition and culture, lion dancing in Newfoundland is still an active and strong representation of Chineseness, although it is a Cantonese version. In traditional theater, or performances of folk drama, meanings are generated and delivered by the reciprocity and a coordination of factors such as mise-en-scene, scenography, narrative, costume, music, dance, and audience-performer interaction (Schechner 1985), all of which may be transmitted generationally. Stage settings and occasions of the performance can be matters of long-standing tradition. Sometimes, even the interaction between performers and audiences is fairly predictable for as Gerand Henri Behague states, “The interactions between performers and audiences reflect the various meanings assigned to the performance event and process. The event itself dictates certain general expectations fashioned

by tradition on the part of both performers and audiences” (Behague 1992, 176). Therefore, in traditional performances, the ability of individuals to influence the original theme is often minimal and in many cases, their creativity is not to add new meanings to the performance but to engender new forms to better convey the conventional knowledge. In Newfoundland, the Chinese lion dance performance, whether by older generation Cantonese-speaking Chinese in the past or new local born-or raised dancers today, represents some historical continuity with earlier dancers forming in China; they present and celebrate Chineseness in general, although that concert carries various meanings for different individuals.

Behague comments that “the social fulfillment of expectations depends on the specific elements present in a given performance occasion, some of which may be unpredictable” (Behague 1992, 176). In this sense, it is plausible that the trivialization of traditional meanings or the historical authenticity of lion dancing is influenced by the preference of the audience who choose to understand the lion dance in a local rather than a foreign way. Richard A. Peterson notes that authenticity “is not inherent in the object or event that is designated authentic but is a socially agreed-upon construct” (Peterson 1997, 5). Francis Tam says, “I guess that, now, what we want to tell people is ‘we are here and we can be different,’ but we don’t really push people to accept the traditional cultural perspectives as what people have in the old country because we are in Canada” (Francis Tam 2013). Nowadays in Newfoundland, most lion dancers and audience members do not prioritize historical authenticity of the Cantonese culture. They do not claim expertise in the ancestral culture of lion dancing and nor do they attempt to promote or understand every detail of the old cultural aspects of this Cantonese tradition.

Instead, as a cultural performance, the lion dance in Newfoundland provides its performers and audience with “a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity

of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication” (Bauman 1977, 43). During the communication process, dancers and audience members who are different from each other in age, region of origin, ethnicity and occupation, are exchanging their perceptions on the lion dance, Chineseness and their own diverse cultural identities which may be or may not be represented by the cultural performance. Because of the exchanges, some spectators of Chinese descent strengthen their cultural affiliation to Chineseness, some may discover or re-discover their cultural identity and some others might choose to distance themselves from their ancestral culture but claim their new understanding of their ethnicity not associated with the lion dance, which is no longer a taken-for-granted pan-ethnic marker. At the same time, the performance itself is continuously changed due to the variations of the personal cultural perceptions of performers and audience members in their communications with co-ethnics and non-Chinese in different social and cultural settings. The current trend from the pursuit of historical authenticity to the presentation of personal sincerity shows that the Chinese lion dance is shifting from a foreign invention to a local creation, which is often used to transmit a vernacular version of ethnic identity which is not simply “Chineseness” but a complex system of definitions of “Chineseness.”

When Chineseness is negotiated in the geographic and cultural space where the ethnic performance –lion dance- is played, a sense of “united community” with identical self-awareness rises among all attendees including performers and audience beyond the social, ethnic and cultural boundaries. A somewhat unique Chineseness becomes the “mainstream” identity in those events featuring Chinese culture and tradition and the united identity therefore temporally transforms all individuals into one category “Chinese” socially and culturally. In this sense, Chinese communities are re-organized and re-integrated by a cultural performance that

constructs a new identity to embrace people with different cultural origins into one. My observations reflect Morgan and Brask's theory of the function of some theaters in the construction of a community:

Attendance at theatre can clearly serve to foster a sense of community and to serve as a defence against alienation from the social order. The suggestion of attendants will, to a greater or lesser extent, cross-cut the sub-groups comprising the membership of the body politic. Independently of the content of the theatrical production, the fact of aggregation in common purpose (perhaps the notion of being 'entertained' is the primary motivation for audience attendance) promotes a sense of pan-state social solidarity. This point is not likely to be missed by a power structure seeking to promote a closing of the ranks behind the social status quo..... Theatre is directed to communication between segments or groups within state societies, heterogeneous groups based upon differences in ranked class, ethnicity and place of residence (the multi-community aspect of state hegemonies). It is the cosmology and ideology confining the social order and political hierarchy of a state society which is to be communicated to the other groups comprising the state. (Morgan and Brask 1988, 188-192)

Over the years, lion dancing has become the symbol of the newly-formed community and it is maintained as a tradition, which is not only theatrical, but also ritualistic. In the studies of lion dancing, a majority of scholars argue that the current theatrical performance in various public or private civil occasions evolves from the ancient ceremonial ritual. For example, Anne Raulin defined lion dance as a ritual dance, which "acts as a quite spectacular epiphenomenon which partakes of an evident continuity between decorative, religious and festive practices" (Raulin 1991, 46). Slovenz[-Low] added, "The lion dances attract the public attention necessary for the success of the private rites they perform" (Slovenz[-Low] 1987, 88). According to her, "the core issue" of the performance was not for entertainment, but was "the efficacy of the ritual itself" (Slovenz[-Low] 1987, 88). In addition to the performance, "a body of myth, a cosmology and a belief system" in association with lion dance is also recognized by the members of the audience in general (Morgan and Brask 1988, 193). In this regard, Newfoundland's Chinese lion dance, which is a Cantonese version, ironically, in some cases, not only represents Chinese who are

born in the culture of southern China, but also provide a possibility to unite all individuals of Chinese descent regardless of their regional, generational, linguistic and other difference as “one” community.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In 2004, Alisa Morrissey wrote that “the images of Newfoundland Chinese... are faded like old paragraphs: a 109-year history has gone unnoticed by many people in the province” (*The Independent* January 18, 2004). First and foremost this thesis has been an attempt to make the Chinese and their culture visible to their neighbors. It is also a history of immigration and ethnography of the adaption, expansion, diversification, conflicts, cooperation, and fragmentation of community life for Chinese residents of Newfoundland. Chan Chau Tam comments on my project, “This is very important and it is not just for completion of a PhD dissertation but also for the future and for our children and grandchildren to look at the history that we have experienced, say, what kind of life we had. I want my children and my grandchildren to know how difficult the life was” (Chan Chau Tam 2012).

In this study, I have been primarily interested in how Chineseness emerges from the tension between individuals with free will and individual agendas and the collective ideology of the ethnic group as a whole, as well as from social and cultural conflicts between the ethnic community(-ies) and the host society. From the first arrival of Chinese immigrants in the 1890s to the implementation of a new Canadian immigration policy in 1967, the majority of Chinese immigrants who came to Newfoundland were from the same socioeconomic class with a very similar cultural and linguistic background. They represented a Cantonese version of Chineseness so that it is reasonable to consider the Chinese community in the pre-confederation period as a homogeneous ethnic group. Prior to Newfoundland’s confederation in 1949, many of them suffered institutional discrimination, economic restrictions and social isolation due to the xenophobic atmosphere in the host society. Chinese individuals were therefore forced to rely on

their co-ethnics for financial and emotional support which in turn strengthened their sense of what it meant to be “Chinese.” During this period, personal and some socio-cultural characteristics other than ethnicity were often ignored by members of the non-Chinese society, who simply divided the people in Newfoundland as Chinese and whites. Even after the discriminatory law regarding Chinese immigration was repealed in 1949, Chinese immigration under the family reunion program did not change the homogeneity of the Chinese demographical presence in Newfoundland because these newcomers shared the same socioeconomic and cultural background as the first wave of immigrants.

However, family reunification created a new locally-born or -raised Chinese population different from the older generations. They were locally raised and educated so that they not only largely kept their Chineseness roots, but also were more apt to accept local culture and values. They emerged as a group of cultural wanderers representing a creolized Chineseness which combined both traditional Chinese and local Newfoundland cultural elements. Socioeconomically, most of them chose to discontinue family businesses such as laundries and restaurants but completed higher education and took up careers in mainstream society. In 1967 a new policy was adopted by Canada to select immigrants by certain educational and economic criteria instead of traditional racial- and ethnic-based standards. Many qualified Chinese professionals from all over the world began to settle down in Newfoundland and establish families. Since then, the Chinese population has become more diverse and this diversity has been enhanced by the arrival of Chinese students at Memorial University. As a result, the former homogeneous Chinese society has been transformed by new generations and new immigration waves. Since 1976, new organizations have formed to represent various Chinese groups or subgroups such as Cantonese-speaking Chinese, Taiwanese Chinese, Mainland Chinese, Chinese

students and Chinese Christians. The shifting of Chinese community(-ies) has also been noticed by local Newfoundlanders who gradually discovered that Chinese residents of the province are different in terms of religion, political opinions, professional domains, region of origin and dates of immigration. Although all individuals in this thesis claim their ethnicity as Chinese or at least associate with their Chinese roots-physically or culturally, they have their own and sometimes competing perceptions on what Chineseness means. For example, Taiwanese argue their cultural differences from Mainland Chinese; second or later generation individuals of Chinese descent claim a creolized definition of Chineseness. These differences are more recognizable during the interactions between Chinese individuals and between Chinese and non-Chinese. The diversity of people of Chinese descent deconstructed the stereotypical image of Chinese as homogeneous in the mind of local Newfoundlanders and in the self-perceptions of Chinese individuals.

The diverse presence of Chinese in Newfoundland does not suggest an exclusive existence of Chinese sub-communities or individuals, who are, on the other hand, actually closely connected, directly or indirectly, to each other based on their obvious ethnic and/or cultural commonalities. A geographically visible commercial or residential Chinese district known as “Chinatown” has never emerged in St. John’s or any other cities or towns in Newfoundland. Based on her study of the people of Chinese descent in St. Louis, a relatively remote, middle west city away from other American cosmopolitan cities with larger Chinese populations, such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City, Huping Ling proposes a new model with which to study Chinese communities in North America. Ling labels it as “cultural community:”

A cultural community does not always have particular physical boundaries, but is socially defined by the common cultural practices and beliefs of its members. A cultural community is constituted by the Chinese language school, Chinese religious institutions, Chinese American community organizations, Chinese American cultural agencies, Chinese American political coalitions or ad hoc committees, and the wide

range of cultural celebrations and activities facilitated by the aforementioned agencies and groups. (Ling 2009, 130)

According to Ling, a cultural community possesses three unique characteristics: 1) “the absence of a geographical concentration of physical structures”; 2) a demography dominated by professionals; and 3) the absence of “a class cleavage or confrontation.” (Ling 2009, 146-147) In the case of Chinese in Newfoundland, with the exception of the St. John’s Chinese Christian Church that has a permanent building, none of the other Chinese organizations own property or even rent a regular office. Moreover, although the percentage of professionals in the Chinese population is undetermined, my fieldwork suggests that the number of Chinese professionals exceeds that of individuals employed in other fields such as in the service sector. In this regard, the Chinese in St. John’s has become an ethnic minority group which is economically and socially integrated into the larger society. In terms of socio-economic class, the majority of Chinese residents in Newfoundland are middle or upper-middle class and therefore the need for mutual aid is rarely part of co-ethnic communication. Thus, in a community where members are not bound by economic interests and the goal of business networking, gatherings of Chinese residents in Newfoundland, especially those in St. John’s, most often serve social and cultural functions. Participation in a variety of socio-cultural activities organized by various Chinese associations is often to preserve cultural heritage and achieve ethnic solidarity. In this sense, the Chinese community in St. John’s constitutes a cultural community. However, Ling’s concept of “cultural community” is free of conflicts and “competitions” whereas intra-group differences are frequently highlighted in the social and cultural life of Chinese in Newfoundland.

Regarding the intra-group diversity, Krista Chatman Li provides a good summary of the demographic changes experienced by the Chinese in Newfoundland, although she does not further her discussion to a deeper level:

Chinese immigrants in this period (post 1978) were remarkably different in education, language, and financial background than their predecessors. Thus the nature of the Chinese community changed profoundly. In addition, the Chinese ‘community’ became Chinese ‘communities’ as immigrants no longer shared a common geographic background, as early immigrants who were almost entirely from Guangdong, did. Taiwanese immigrants, for example, formed their own community group and many were reluctant to join the Chinese organizations composed largely of mainland Chinese. (Li 2010, 232)

In this thesis, in looking at Chinese restaurants, the celebration of Chinese New Year and the lion dance, I have explored how different subgroups of Chinese or individuals of Chinese descent use folklore in intra- and inter-ethnic communications and negotiations to either build a group culture and/or claim an individual version of ethnicity. In Chapter Four, I have identified three major Chinese culinary traditions, namely, Chinese home cooking, North American Chinese food and the “traditional” Chinese food in contemporary Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland. Many Chinese individuals –restaurant workers and customers have engaged in the discussion of “authentic” Chinese food. However, as I have suggested, authentic Chinese food is a locally constructed folk idea, which is often defined based on individuals’ perceptions on Chineseness. The process of negotiation reflects the local power structure of the Chinese community(-ies) and the interrelationship between Chinese groups or subgroups. Chapter Five continues the discussion of Chineseness by exploring the private and the public Chinese New Year celebrations. Historically, the Chinese New Year celebrations which were limited in ethnic and domestic domains have become publically recognized and accepted events organized by Chinese voluntary organizations such as the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. In the private sphere, various personal experiences of celebrating Chinese New Year indicate the diverse cultural backgrounds of individuals who are strongly bound to the cultures of their ancestral regions in Chinese centers. In the public sphere, because of the identity of most

organizers as locally born or raised individuals, their understanding of Chineseness is largely different from older generations and some newcomers who are still strongly influenced by traditional Chinese cultures and traditions. Corresponding to their own creolized Chinese identity, as cultural wanderers bearing partially Chinese and partially local cultural knowledge, festival organizers present creolized Chinese New Year celebrations, which are multicultural, personal and vernacular. Chapter Six begins with the discussion of the difference between the older and newer generation lion dancers in their attitudes towards pursuing an authentic Cantonese lion dance. My investigation shows that unlike those older generation dancers, the contemporary dancers, who are mostly second or later generation Chinese descendants, have less interest in restoring historical authenticity than presenting their personal authenticity, a local understanding of the dance and their ethnicity. Along with the negotiation of lion dancers, different responses of audience members to the performance based on their own pre-immigration experiences also indicate their diverse socially and culturally constructed Chineseness.

I found that, individuals, who represent different and sometimes competing traditions, continuously attempt to declare the “authenticity” of the “Chinese” cultures that they belong to in a Habermasian public sphere (Habermas 1964, 1989) or a Bakhtinian multivocal society (Bakhtin 1968, 1981) which the Canadian multicultural setting. In many cases, the communication and negotiation emerge from the tension of two or more primary streams, for example, the tradition of the old culture, the hybrid vernacular experience and the fully acculturated. Many individuals wander between these streams and incorporate them all into their own unique definition of Chineseness. Overall, my fieldwork suggests that diasporic Chinese identity (or identities) is (or are) constructed as multiple, creolized, flexible, contingent, situational, adaptable, changeable, malleable in a multi-vocal society. It is clear that, in many

cases, especially on an individual level, Chineseness is not conceptualized by any given or inherited factors such as physical traits or kinship; rather, it is constructed through negotiation that takes place in interpersonal communication and inter-ethnic interaction. It is changed through the alteration of institutional policies, social circumstances, personal satisfaction and political affiliations.

Therefore, to some extent, the answers of questions like “what is Chineseness” or “what makes an individual Chinese” rely on: 1) if s/he wants to be a Chinese; 2) if the situation allows him/her to be a Chinese; and most importantly, 3) if s/he can attain identities other than Chinese. In other words, a personal identity is determined by how open a society is and how many options are available to be chosen. Chineseness can be negotiated in Newfoundland only if the society opens the forum for discussion.

It is misleading to overstate the role of personal choice, however, in many cases, an individual is self-identifying or considered by default to be a member or an associate member of his/her ethnic groups that Milton Yinger defines as “a segment of a large society whose members are thought by themselves or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients” (Yinger 1994, 3). Rosan A. Jordan suggests that an ethnic group has at least three “separate but interrelated” functions: psychological, sociological and cultural (Jordan 1975, 371). According to Jordan, psychologically, an ethnic group may provide the group and its members a self-identification; sociologically, an ethnic group provides “a network of organizations and informal social relationships which permits and encourages the members of the ethnic group to remain within the confines of the group for all of their primary relationships and some of their secondary relationships throughout all the stages of the life-

cycle” (Gordon, 1964, 34); culturally, an ethnic group must be responsible for maintaining and transmitting its distinct ethnic culture for its members (Jordan 1975, 371). Jordan’s definition indicates that an ethnic group, which holds various resources and provides several services to individuals, is somewhat external but pre-existing to those individuals. That is to say, an individual actually attains his/her identity in the collective sense ahead of his/her personal choice to either accept or reject this identity as his/her personal identity. Therefore, in regards to ethnicity, an individual enacts at least two identities – the collective and mandatory identity and the personal and optional identity. Ethnicity at the personal level is a combination of these two identities.

This collective identity is mainly conceptualized by the “past” or one’s “historical identification.” as Millon Gordon (1964, 53) terms it. It claims a close relationship between the ethnic past and the current event. Gordon recognizes the function of the historical past as providing the foundation to generate an agreed-on ethnic identity in terms of physical or historical factors. These “categorical commonalities,” which are primarily pre-assigned, are important to the construction of personal “Chineseness.” Along with common interests, beliefs and aspects of shared culture, or, in the words of Anthony Smith (1990), an “ethnic core,” one’s historical identification may have brought Chinese residents together. However, categorical commonalities are often blurred in acculturated situations demonstrating that identity formation is not fixed within one national or cultural territory but characterized by “complicated crossovers and cultural mixes” (Hall 1992, 310). Dwyer writes “Such cross-overs are sustained through a wide variety of familial, imaginative, material and mediated transnational linkages and connections, which stretch across ‘diaspora space’ (Brah 1996) linking different (and differently) postcolonial places” (Dwyer 2002, 184).

The experiences of Chinese in Newfoundland reveal how individuals maneuver and negotiate their personal identity (-ies) in a pre-set collectively ethnic setting and how they perceive the compatibility of a pan-ethnic label and ethnic individuality. In many cases, Chinese in Newfoundland continuously wander between boundaries of different traditions, which are all related to a bigger so-called “Chinese tradition,” and between the individual and collective domains. In *In Search of Authenticity: the Formation of Folklore Studies*, Regina Bendix says: “For all of our senses and all of experiential cravings, we have created a market of identifiable authenticities.” (Bendix 1997. 3) In this thesis, individuals of Chinese descent who affiliate with different Chinese subgroups are pursuing the meaning of “real” Chineseness by judging the authenticity of various traditions that carried on in Newfoundland such as foodways, cultural dance and festival celebrations. In this sense, the story of the people of Chinese descent in Newfoundland reveals the aspiration of this group of people to understand themselves, the history which their forefathers have experienced and the society that they live in and claim a sense of belonging. This thesis therefore is able to declare its connection to the folklore scholarship, which, as Bendix shows, reflects an attempt of scholars to instrumentalize authenticity in shaping folkloristic theory, application and institutionalization. In addition, in terms of the contribution of the diasporic communities to the understanding of Chineseness, I would argue that the Chinese individuals in diasporic communities present possibilities to challenge the taken-for-granted Chinese identity which is often designated by dominant ideological powers to individuals in the confines of Chinese centers.

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Appendix: A Brief History of Chinese Students in Newfoundland and Labrador

One of earliest recorded Chinese students in Newfoundland in the period prior to 1949 was Hayford Fong who attended secondary school for 18 months in order to get the rebate of his paid head tax. Kim Hong remembered that many early Chinese immigrants and their descendants including himself went to the Catholic school called Bishop Field College. However, many Chinese stayed in school only for a short period to learn some English but many of them did not finish their secondary studies. George Ding Au was the first Chinese and Kim Hong was the second who enrolled in a post-secondary program. In the Fall of 1957, he started his pre-medical studies at the Memorial University of Newfoundland on Parade Street. As mentioned above, since the late 1960s, a number of Chinese students from Commonwealth countries and regions, such as Malaysia and Hong Kong came to Newfoundland to continue their post-secondary or graduate studies. As foreign students “10,000 miles away from home,” (Betty Wong, Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006, 24) In 1967, they formed the Chinese Student Society to deal with loneliness. In 1975, the Chinese Student Society conducted the first province-wide survey entitled as “Chinese Community in Newfoundland” to document the history of Chinese immigration and the social life of the Chinese community in Newfoundland (Hong et al. 1975).

Due to the small number of Chinese students in Newfoundland, they were close to each other and actively participated into various activities of the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. The frequent interaction between the student group and the local Chinese association could be seen in the early meeting minutes of the Chinese Association. For example, in the executive meeting of the Chinese Association on January 3, 1979, Simon Tam, the then president of the Chinese Student Society stressed the importance of the cooperation

between the Chinese Student Society and the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. On behalf of the Chinese Student Society, he also sought for the support from the Chinese Association for his photography workshop and asked to loan the lion costumes for the students' celebration of the Chinese New Year.

In 1980, a dozen Chinese scholars as either visiting professors or graduate students, who were funded by the government of the People's Republic of China, came to Newfoundland to study science and mathematics. Their presence brought the visits of officials from the People's Republic of China. In the same year, the PRC Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Wong Wai first established the connection between PRC embassy and the Chinese community in Newfoundland, especially between the Embassy and the student group from mainland China. To further strengthen the *guanxi* between PRC government and local Chinese, after the visit of Mr. Wong Wai, officials from mainland China came to Newfoundland more regularly. For example, in 1983, Mr. Liu Min, Deputy Ambassador to Canada visited Newfoundland, followed by the official visit of the Ambassador, Mr. Yu Zhan in 1985.

In 1986, a group of Chinese students from Mainland China were admitted by Memorial University of Newfoundland with financial assistance and Dr. Pengfei Liu was one of them who stayed in Newfoundland after graduation to work and raise family. The novel *Bai Xue Hong Chen* (*White Snow and Red Dirt*, published in China in 1998) written by Zhen Yan, who came to Memorial University to study Sociology in 1988, documented the life of these early PRC students and their interaction with local Chinese community. The story indicates the existence of a close group of mainland Chinese students, some of whom worked part-time in local Chinese restaurants to support themselves.

Attributed to the assistance of the PRC Embassy for Canada, the existing Chinese Student Society evolved to involve the students and visiting scholars from mainland China and transformed into the current Chinese Students and Scholars Association (MUNCSSA), which was officially founded in 1982 (Daniel Wong 2013). In addition to the coming of PRC students, since late 1980s, due to the expansion and development of a variety of programs, many new graduated PhDs have been recruited into the faculty body of Memorial University of Newfoundland. For example, in 1988, four Chinese PhDs, John Shieh, Siwei Lu, Jian Tang and Cao An Wang, were appointed as assistant professors in the young Department of Computer Science. As new graduates, these new Chinese faculty members were at the same age level as those Chinese graduate students so that they all actively got involved into the various activities of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association.

In the early years, the MUNCSSA served as the host for the arrivals of Chinese officials and various visitors from mainland China. John Shieh and his wife Wendy Long, who were the key contact of the Chinese Embassy in Newfoundland in 1990s, says, “In late 1980s and early 1990s, China was not as developed as it is today. So those people from Ottawa had very tight budget. Today, they always invite us to go out for dinner, but in those days, our family and other families of Chinese professors always accommodated them when they travelled to St. John’s. We had potluck parties and we also asked students to come for meal” (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012). Long also recalls,

I was not working at the time and I was always the host of the various groups from mainland China. One year, I could not remember the exact year, but in the early 1990s, Chinese Female Softball team came to Newfoundland for an international contest. With some Chinese students, I visited them at night and cooked dumplings and rice soups for them, who didn’t get used to the local cuisine. They were very happy to see us. At the final game, I also ask the Chinese Students and Scholar Association for help to organize a pep team. Because the population of the Chinese students were small, we asked the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador for drums and gangs to

make our cheering louder. I also invited them to my house for dinner the day before they left. (John Shieh and Wendy Long 2012)

In 1999, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association in cooperation with the Chinese Association of Newfoundland and Labrador hosted the visit of the Premier of People's Republic of China, Mr. Zhu Rong Ji to Newfoundland, where was his first stop in Canada. In the following years, when China is becoming a booming economic center and has more funding for diplomatic affairs, the Education Office of the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa on behalf of the Chinese government started to provide financial support and other diplomatic service for students, visiting scholars and their spouses with Chinese citizenship as well as Chinese settlers holding Canadian passports but still having strong Chinese connection.

The cooperative and participatory relationship between Chinese faculty members and students under the rubric of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association was well maintained till when the generational gap between professors and students enlarged. The Chinese professors and some visiting scholars became less active when younger generations of Chinese students appeared on campus. Therefore, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association gradually became a student-only group, in which fewer Chinese faculty members were less involved in the organization and services of the association.

Since 2002, especially the second half of the first decade of twenty-first century, because of the development of the English as a Second Language program at Memorial and the cooperation between Chinese universities and Memorial University, many young Chinese from upper- or upper middle-class families of mainland China came to Newfoundland to pursue post-secondary education. Yvonne Collette, an ISA staff member and the former organizer of the international bazaars at Memorial University of Newfoundland said, "Many Chinese students actually like that there aren't many other Chinese here because they are forced to interact more

with the community” (*The Telegram*, March 7, 2006). According to Sonja Knutson, the manager of the International Students Advising Office (ISA) of Memorial University, the PRC student body grew bigger over the years. In addition to ESL students, there were 345 in 2006, 353 in 2007, 310 in 2008, 380 in 2009 and 465 in 2010 (Sonja Knutson 2011). The arrivals of these PRC students largely changed the demography of Chinese student body to a PRC student undergraduate student-dominated group. According to my observation and my experience as the two-termed (2010-2012) president of the MUNCSSA, although, automatically, all students as Chinese descendants are members of the association without membership fees, the intra-group diversity makes the association a loose group. The set-up facebook group, renren page (a Chinese version of “facebook”) and Tencent QQ group (a Chinese online communicative tool) enhance the interaction between PRC students, but the divergences still exists.